APRIL 2000

NEA Today

The Magazine of the National Education A

Salary Squeeze

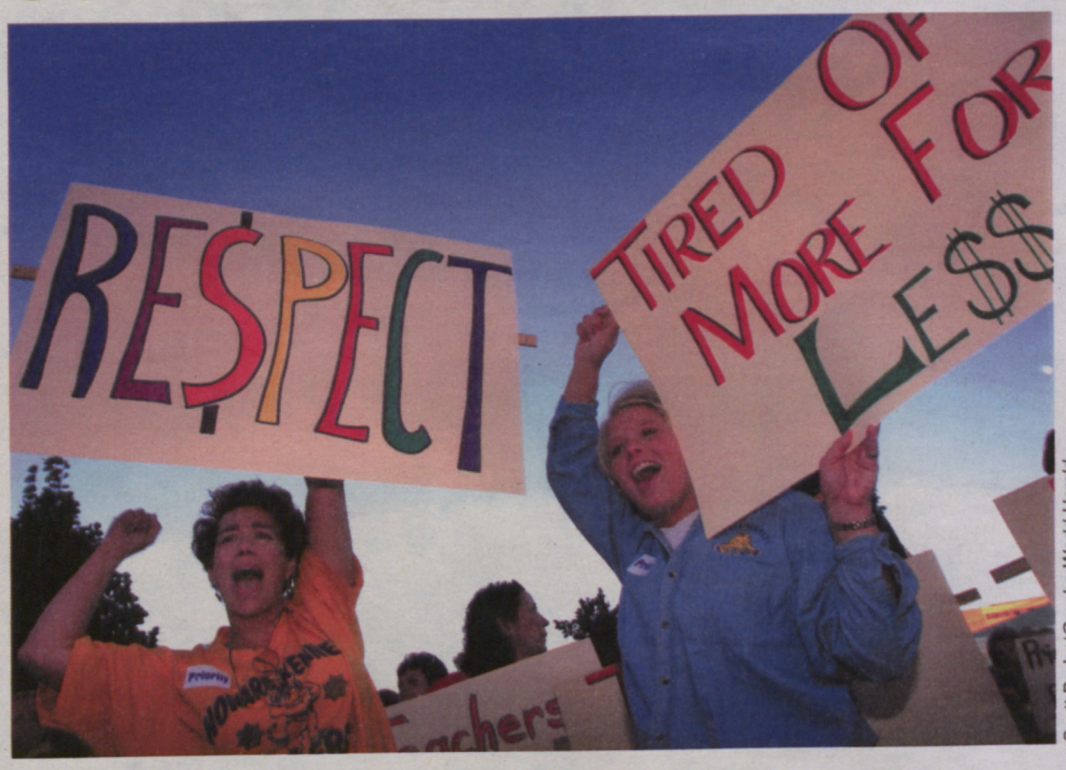
Math teacher Chris Johnson drives the bus to make ends meet.

See page 8

NEA Today

Volume 18 • Number 7

COVER STORY



Scott Bruhn/*Omaha World-Herald*

Salary Squeeze
page 8

Omaha teachers Susan Trover, left, Kristy Fahnholz, and their colleagues turned out in force in February, demanding better pay to help students achieve at high levels. Nebraska teachers rank 43rd in the nation in salaries, while students' test scores rank fifth.

Cover photo by Chris Seward

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Letters

HER TURN

Imagine my dismay after reading the March My Turn article written by one of my peers.

I was astonished to read the negative comments about teachers in our district, particularly those in our middle school. I read the article again, hoping to find something positive. I find it disturbing that the focus of the author's comments was not our students' many accomplishments, nor was it the dedication the teachers in Roselle Park have always shown, but rather that our teachers feel "despair" and "contempt" for their chosen profession and are nothing but "complainers" and "gossips."

This couldn't be farther from the truth. After interacting positively with so many of them in my 20 plus years in the district, I have found our teachers to be nothing but professional. We care deeply about our students, and I resent the implications that were made. I am appalled that both Mr. Verducci and the editors of *NEA Today* have chosen to malign the fine teachers in Roselle Park rather than to applaud them.

Kathleen Peterson
Roselle Park, New Jersey

VERY DEBATABLE

I read with interest your March debate column, "Should new teachers get the toughest assignments?" It brought back vivid memories of my first-year experience, 50 years ago in Yakima, Washington.

I was given a combination fifth and sixth grade class of 34 students.

The school auditorium was my classroom, and whenever another teacher wanted to use it for a program, we were moved out to another room. Because my students were neighbors, they knew each other well and also knew all the tricks to make a new teacher's life interesting.

Fortunately, I had a principal who assumed, rightly, that I knew almost nothing about teaching and acted accordingly. I also had the benefit of a veteran teacher who tactfully guided me in the right direction. Otherwise, I believe I would have looked for another career.

I taught for 37 years in Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and California, and found teaching to be a fulfilling and mostly enjoyable tenure. I wonder how many potentially fine teachers have been lost by this "throw them in the water and see who swims" approach.

Harold Morris
Menlo Park, California

At our middle school, new teachers get a mix of groups and not just the toughest.

At another secondary school in our district, the veteran teachers pick up the best courses—leaving the new teacher with the lowest groups, the toughest assignments.

The former situation is by far the fairest for all staff members.

Allen Goguen
Gardner, Massachusetts

Nobody in their right mind would knowingly and intentionally assign a new teacher the toughest assignments.

Unfortunately, this situation usually comes about because so many new teachers are hired after the beginning of the school year, leaving only the worst possible combinations available to them.

To suggest that teaching in the most difficult classes would allow new teachers to "toughen themselves" is ludicrous. This is one major reason why so many teachers leave the profession early on in their careers.

As a veteran teacher, I feel a responsibility to make the profession as easy as possible for new teachers. I have gone so far as to suggest to my carpool partner, a first-year teacher, that I would exchange assignments with her for next year if she wished to do so and the principal okays it.

New teachers need a stable environment that will allow them to get their feet wet.

Sports teams don't usually throw rookie players onto the field in the most important games unless they have no other choice. Why should the teaching profession be any less mindful of its players than sports teams?

Randy Freeman
Tualatin, Oregon

VOUCHERS

In the March *NEA Today*, letter writer Caroline Zimmermann suggested that public school proponents look into why private schools are "succeeding."

While I commend Zimmermann for attempting to embrace what works, I wholeheartedly disagree with her premise. We must not fall into the voucher trap.

After all, "success" is an easily manipulated concept, and the voucher movement is well schooled in the art of propaganda. But despite the arguments to the contrary, vouchers—as proposed—are wrong for two very important reasons.

First, there are the obvious church-state problems. It is estimated that 85 percent of all private schools are religious in nature. Therefore, 85 percent of all voucher money would be used to subsidize religious institutions.

Second, but certainly no less important, is the issue of democracy. Private schools, by their very nature, are undemocratic. They are unaccountable to the public and may discriminate as to who is admitted.

On the other hand, public schools, by way of state and federal regulations, are not only accountable to the public but are free and open to all comers.

Steve Hosch
Gilbert, Iowa

UNPREPARED NEW HIRES

Union implies cooperation, partnership, and mutual respect, but the article entitled "Unprepared New Hires An Unacceptable Reality" (March) destroys such a façade. The author has stratified the NEA into credentialed and non-credentialed (sub-par) teachers.

I wonder how the other 30,000 individuals teaching with emergency permits in the state of California feel about the author's overly simplistic, narrow-minded blurb on "unprepared teachers."

What uncredentialed teachers offer to the school environment is something that most credentialed teachers do not have: experience in the real world.

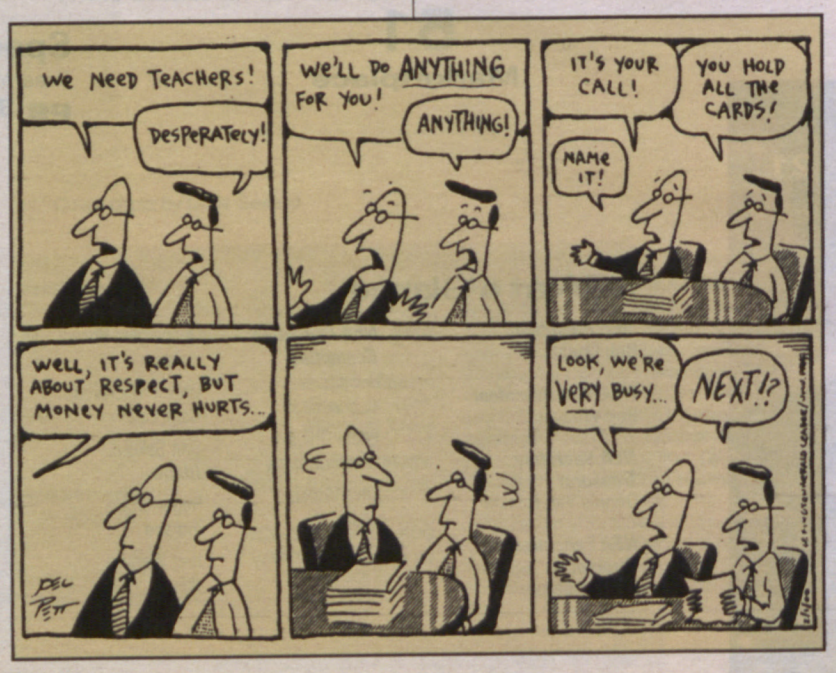
Many of these nontraditional teachers are working in the urban districts where they attended school. Not only are they trying to give back to their own communities, they are also trying to give something to those students that they did not receive: guidance, counseling, an edge in the competitive college game. Many of these teachers represent ethnic minorities from throughout the diverse landscape that is California.

In closing the article, the author applauds a union-sponsored law, which requires districts to notify parents if their child is being taught by a non-certified teacher.

Is a piece of paper so important? Why would a school district hire non-certified teachers if they did not have other qualifications worthy of a teacher?

For those of us who work in the inner city, such a proposal creates an atmosphere of distrust in an already delicate parent-teacher relationship.

Joseph Mulligan
Los Angeles, California



TEACHING READING

I want to know how anyone who teaches is not a teacher of reading (Debate, February) Whether it's math or fiction, economics or E-mail, everyone teaches reading by the very nature of teaching a subject.

The question is: How many need reading? My take is, many. Then the question becomes: What is more important than any subject taught? My take is, if a student doesn't read, the rest is wasted motion.

Randall Youngren
Ellensburg, Washington

Margaret Patterson puts forth a cute argument, and I agree with her. She says teachers should not be required to be trained in the teaching of—tap dancing.

Reading, yes, but not dancing. Dr. Patterson of all people, a teacher of general music, should be aware of how poor reading skill affects the way students can or cannot read music and lyrics.

Poor readers are affected in every discipline, and the more teachers are available to help them, the better. Every teacher does not have to be a reading expert, but every teacher should have some training in teaching reading.

Ron Lepp
Pleasant Hill, Oregon

The parable offered by music teacher Margaret Patterson, to prove that not all teachers need to be able to teach reading, obviously was intended to be sarcastically witty. Unfortunately, her remarks fail on that account.

Every child needs to be prepped ahead of time, in order to comprehend material they are assigned to read. This is not a humorous or frivolous matter. To the contrary, the lack of such instruction has reached a crisis stage in many schools.

The latest national test scores indicate that inability of students to comprehend proficiently what they attempt to read remains at a perilously high level.

Effective teacher education in how to assist children to comprehend written text is not, as Patterson falsely claims, a "cult-like, one-size-fits-all" proposition.

Through this teacher education, teachers learn how to develop student understanding of unfamiliar vocabulary and syntactic structures in a given text, an author's purpose, and how a text is organized—before students attempt to read it.

It is reasonable to expect that all teachers must be able to conduct these procedures.

Patrick Groff
Solon, Iowa

On the debate question—"Should all teachers be trained in the teaching of reading?"—I was disappointed to find that the majority of teachers voted no.

This is my first year of teaching, and I started the year with a fourth grade class, but was switched to a combo class in October. Having attended many reading conferences and now applying what I learned in my credential program as well, I see how I could have assessed and improved my students reading in my fourth grade class.

As educators, we have to understand that just because we teach students in the upper grades, that that doesn't mean those students all read at an upper grade level.

Cecilia Dobson
Orange, California

See Editor's column on page 7.

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
- By E-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
- By Fax: 202/822-7206
- By Phone: 202/822-7201

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

PAUL NEWMAN

I took special interest in the interview with Paul Newman in the February edition. I love Paul Newman as an actor. One of my favorite movies of all is *Absence of Malice*; it's a classic.

But frankly, what does the guy know about military spending? Who is he to know how much is too much or too little for such a complex environment? Do we have any guarantees that hostile nations won't point their weapons at us? Is he privy to satellite surveillance that the rest of us aren't, that can guarantee a nuclear arsenal is not being produced and manned by our enemies? And while he's at it, perhaps he also could shed light as to why many of our military personnel are on food stamps.

There is no better cause in the world than education. That's why I became a teacher. And I would love to see more money invested in education, as long as it is spent wisely. It heartens me to see people such as Paul Newman get involved in a cause they believe in.

Singling out defense as the poster child for waste may play well for the media, but depicts only one side of the issue.

Janey McKillip
Belleville, Illinois

MY TURN: RIGHT NUMBER

I believe that giving out your telephone number to students is a wonderful idea (My Turn, January). As a future educator, I believe that I should be on call. I believe that I should be there for my students. My job does not end at 2:55 p.m.

It's not about the money or else I would have gone into another profession. Caring for your students doesn't stop at the end of the day.

It should be understood that your teacher is a caring individual and not a money-hungry individual waiting to get paid.

Millie Brooks
Paterson, New Jersey

KEEP IT COMING

At 80, retired for many years, I still am glad to keep abreast of what is going on in the world of education. I really enjoy "In the Light Lane," for it reminds me of my teaching career.

Articles about school technology fascinate me. A former student of mine, who uses computers in her classroom every day, has introduced me to the world of cyberspace! Now I can access information without stirring from my home.

My husband and I travel extensively in a motor home, but the laptop and printer go along! Please keep on inspiring those of us who have retired to keep up with what is happening today.

Jamie Wright
Linton, Indiana

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE

Show Us The Money

Educating America's children is not an act of charity

Curiously, in the midst of America's supercharged economy, policymakers are suggesting that teaching should be an act of philanthropy.

Leonard DeFlore, president of the National Catholic Education Association, recently told *The New York Times*, "For most people who go into teaching, money is not an issue. It's like in other helping professions...you know you're not going to make a lot of money doing it."

Similarly, California's governor, Gray Davis, has announced: "I want to make teaching a selfless act of patriotism, something young people will see as a cause that they will do for a limited period of time."

Such assertions are insulting—and dangerous to the future of public education. In a culture that celebrates day-trading, Internet entrepreneurs, and "Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?" who's going to want to work in a school?

Despite the stellar economy, teacher paychecks have barely kept pace with inflation. *Quality Counts 2000*, an annual report on America's teaching force, finds that educators in their 20s earn an average of $7,894 less than other college graduates their age. This pay gap only worsens over time. Teachers ages 44 to 50 earn an average of $23,655 less than their peers in other professions—unless they have a master's degree. Then they earn $32,511 less!

"A recent poll found that 56 percent of Americans would consider a career in teaching—if the salary were at least $60,000."

Salaries for education support staff are even lower—often far below the national median income.

Certainly, people have always gone into education for the "psychic rewards." But low salaries are a significant reason why at least 30 percent of new teachers leave the classroom within five years.

NEA members know that high staff turnover has devastating consequences for children. Research shows that the single most important factor in a child's education is the quality of his or her teacher—and quality depends in large measure upon years of experience.

In the next 10 years, a record number of retirements and skyrocketing school enrollments will create the largest teacher shortage in history. Some 2.2 million new teachers will be needed. How will schools attract and retain talent when a recent national Teacher of the Year earned only $36,000—despite her 30 years' experience?

Interestingly, a recent poll conducted by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., and Harris and Associates found that 56 percent of Americans would consider teaching—if the salary were at least $60,000.

Leonard DeFlore's claims to the contrary, money is an issue.

Money is also an issue where education support personnel are concerned. Forty-two percent of NEA's ESP members are expected to retire in the next 10 years. Retaining skilled education support personnel is crucial to creating a stable learning environment for our children. But how are schools going to attract legions of dedicated support staff when the jobs often pay minimum wage?

Right now, frankly, schools across America are getting a bargain. Education employees are many children's second family. We mediate conflicts, instill values, teach manners, and promote tolerance. We also coach sports teams and chaperone dances. The bargain that we offer cannot—and should not—be banked upon for the future.

States across the nation are currently enjoying record surpluses. Why not devote a share of this wealth to attracting and retaining top-notch educators by paying all school employees competitively?

Comments? You can E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org. If you would like a response, please be sure to include your name and NEA local affiliate.

Visit the FamilyEducation Network booth at the upcoming
CEC, NCEA, and SchoolTech Expo conferences.

Word Problem #11

If Mrs. Crabtree spends one hour developing a website with Class webCreate, and that saves her one hour per student per week, how happy will Mrs. Crabtree be at the end of the week?

Creating a class website is a great idea. But where can you find the time to make that happen, not to mention the technology? Introducing Class webCreate from myschoolonline.com. If you can type, you can put your classroom online in less than an hour — and it's absolutely free. You'll use 6 custom webpage creators, including homework, calendar, student showcase, and class newsletter that make creating a class website quick and easy. Go to **www.myschoolonline.com/class** and spend a little time creating something that can make a big difference.

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READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

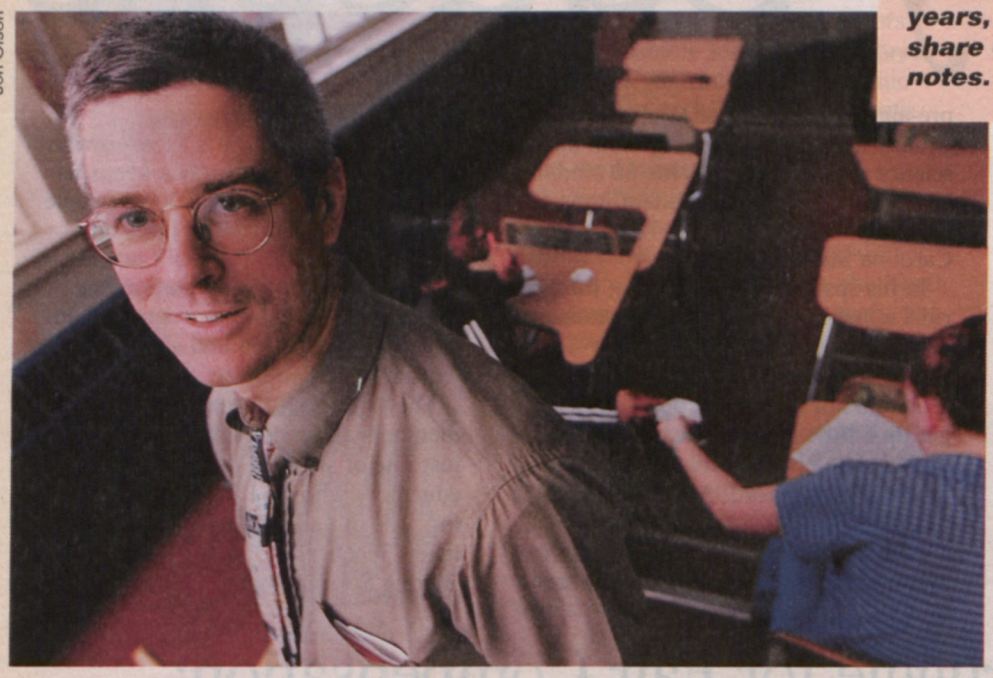
He Said, She Said

You know it happens. You turn your back for a minute, and the notes start flying behind you. Most of the notes you see are just adolescent chit-chat, but not always.

BY JIM FARRELL

Ordinarily, I would have been thrilled to see this particular student with her head down, writing like crazy. She was usually pretty hard to motivate.

Alas, I hadn't explained the assignment yet and, in fact, hadn't passed out the paper that we would be using in my eighth-grade language arts class that day.



Jon Olson

So I wandered over, saw what she was working on, and took the note from her as she gave me a meek and embarrassed smile. I glanced at what she'd written before stuffing it in my pocket, and almost caught myself smiling, too.

Lil' Jewel,

Hey girl. Sup with U? N.M.H. Just chillin' in L.A. b4 I fall asleep b/c this book is soooooo boreing ....

It went on like that, although I never did read the whole thing. I *did* talk to its author briefly on her way out of class, to remind her about our previous conversations about staying on task and to underscore her somewhat precarious academic plight.

I added, as a sort of afterthought, that "boring" doesn't have an "e."

Ah, notes. They are part of every middle school's culture, a fundamental communication tool used by students who are fueled by gossip and conversation but spend their day being forced to relocate every 45 minutes and quiet down once they reach a new destination.

Grammar aside, I'm not afraid to admit that some of the liveliest, most interesting writing done in my room is ... well, let's just say, not assigned. The cryptic language can be fascinating (N.M.H., incidentally, stands for "not much here"). The candor and honesty can be refreshing, or moving, even alarming and disturbing.

A good teacher, of course, tries to tap that reservoir of passion within students, but in a way that promotes inspired writing done in the context of whatever it is that's being studied.

When that happens, everybody wins.

When, on the other hand, students use class time inappropriately, and you catch 'em writing notes, you've got a decision to make.

Often, I'll just tell a student: "Put it away. If I see it again, I'll take it."

Other times, I'll take the note, place it unread on my desk, and return it at the end of class with a stern warning.

And then there are the times when, for one reason or another, I will read some or all of a note. (This, I should add, is an option I explain to students at the beginning of the year and periodically after that.)

The contents sometimes reveal or suggest behaviors that demand intervention. Drug use. Sexual activity. The use of profane language. What you read can lead to the involvement of guidance counselors, social workers, administrators, and, obviously, parents.

Though Connecticut's Jim Farrell has been teaching just four years, he's seen his share of student notes.

Most of the time, thankfully, the issues are less vexing.

"Are you going to the dance?"

"Did you hear what she said he said about her?"

And, of course:

"This book is soooooooo boreing."

That one stung a bit, I'll admit. Oh, how nice it would be one day to pick off a note and find out that instead of chillin', I would learn that a student found my language arts class to be thrillin'.

That would make me O.H.T.

One happy teacher. ✔

Jim Farrell teaches eighth grade language arts at Bennet Middle School in Manchester, Connecticut. In addition, he works part-time as an editor for The Hartford Courant, *where he oversees a Web site designed to help teachers by providing weekly online reading lessons. The site also includes a weekly column Farrell writes about life in the classroom.*
Check out the Web site at: http://courant.ctnow.com/projects/read/.

Editor's Note

Two regular features in February's *NEA Today* produced more than the usual reader reaction.

One was our debate on the question: Should all teachers be trained as teachers of reading?

Initially, the yes side of the question, argued by Pennsylvania's Becky Pringle, was carrying the day. Three of every four votes favored her position. Then the tide turned.

Bill Fischer
editor

At press time, after several hundred votes, the no side, championed by South Carolina member Margaret Patterson, had forged ahead by 54 percent to 46 percent.

That's the vote total we reported in the March issue of *NEA Today*, which you received in late February.

A week or so later, after checking the vote tally again, we found that the tide had turned once again, toward Pringle's affirmative side of the issue.

The point here isn't to emphasize which of the debaters "won" so much as to note how the topic had seemed to have caused people to stop and think, to form an opinion, then to act on that view by voting in the *NEA Today* poll. (By the way, you can vote in our debates by going to www.nea.org/neatoday.)

NEA President Bob Chase's February column on high stakes testing also drew heavy reader response. Dozens of NEA members fired off E-mails in response.

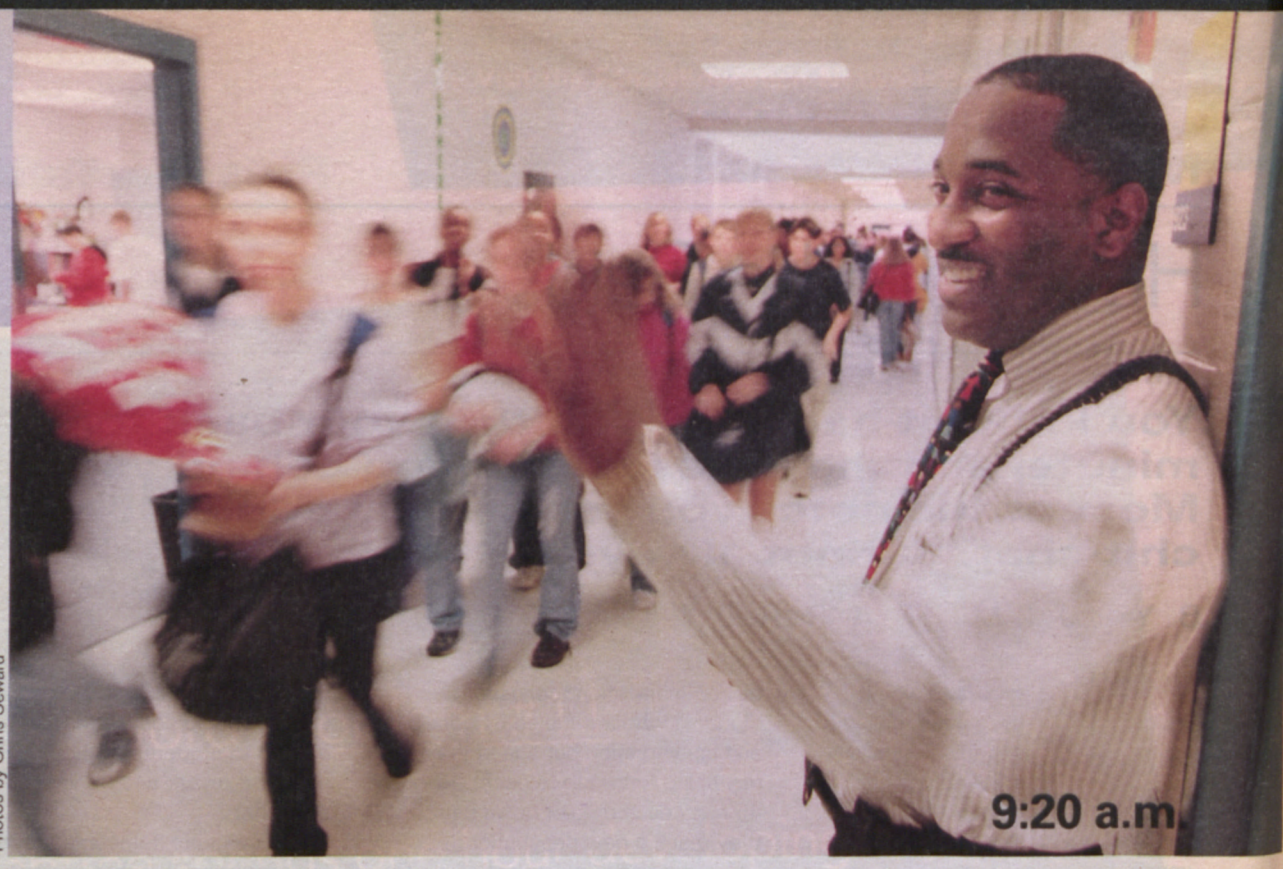
The overwhelming majority of those who wrote shared the column's concerns about the overemphasis being placed on tests and what that means for teachers and students.

Said one reader: "I am horrified at the new tests in my state and the devastating message it sends to our new generation."

To see how test mania has affected members and students in Massachusetts, and the NEA state affiliate's response, see pages 14 and 15.

Bill Fischer

Chris Johnson knows how to connect with his teenage students. Teaching math and science, he's a valuable player in the American economy. But his salary doesn't recognize his importance.



Photos by Chris Seward

Across the nation, many educators still need second jobs to pay the bills.

Salary Squeeze

NEA member Christopher Johnson rises every morning at 5:30 a.m., as the morning light spreads through his home in Raleigh, North Carolina. At 6:15, he climbs into the yellow school bus parked outside and starts the diesel engine.

Then, after picking up 60 teenagers, Johnson pulls up in front of West Millbrook Middle School and the kids troop off to class. Johnson parks the bus—and follows them in.

By 7:30, Johnson is teaching, guiding his 7th graders through the mysteries of pre-algebra. The rest of Johnson's day is equally busy. After teaching math and science all day, he drives his 60 students home, then becomes a student himself, taking graduate courses at North Carolina State University.

In his spare time, by the way, Johnson runs a mentoring program for students at West Millbrook.

Johnson, of course, would rather his schedule not be this hectic. He'd love to get up a little later and leave the driving to someone else, but that's a luxury Johnson can't afford. After six years, his teaching salary is just $30,000.

"I drive the bus to pay for my home and my car," says Johnson, whose second job pays $10,000 a year.

It's teachers like Chris Johnson who'll determine whether America keeps its high tech edge, and many local people appreciate that fact—and Johnson's dedication. He's the school's teacher of the year, and a local TV station has honored his mentoring program. But Johnson's dedication and skill have not won him a good salary.

The same could be said for NEA members all across America. Johnson is just one of an army of moonlighting educators who find themselves collecting tolls or calling Bingo to make ends meet. Teachers, notes the Educational Testing Service, make significantly less

NEA EXPLORES NEW WAYS TO DETERMINE PAY

Over the past year, a number of NEA local affiliates have been exploring new frameworks for compensating teachers and other school staff, as part of their efforts to promote professional development and get more funding into their school systems.

Last fall, NEA President Bob Chase asked the members of the NEA Professional Standards and Practices Committee to review these developments and to report back to the NEA Representative Assembly, which meets this July in Chicago.

Watch future editions of *NEA Today* for more on the debate over approaches to compensation.

The Struggle for Fair Compensation: How NEA Affiliates Are Winning Raises

America is beginning to think its teachers should be getting raises—and NEA is spreading that word to lawmakers and education officials across the United States.

A recent national public opinion poll, conducted for NEA by a respected, bipartisan team of pollsters, found that voters now rate education the nation's top issue, more than twice as important as taxes (38 vs. 17 percent).

The same poll found that the public considers increasing salaries is an important approach to improving schools.

These poll findings made headlines in papers throughout the nation, and NEA is working hard to make sure that the nation's political leaders get the message.

Many already do. Vice President Al Gore, for instance, has made increased school funding a central plank in his campaign platform. His program, if enacted, would earmark federal dollars for higher teacher salaries, with increases as high as $10,000 for teachers in high-poverty areas.

NEA affiliates are making three key points as they work to mobilize public support for higher pay.

First, the nation is in the midst of record-breaking prosperity. If not now for decent pay, when?

Second, the nation faces a devastating teacher shortage.

"We can no longer get teachers on the cheap," says Education Secretary Richard Riley, who estimates that America will need 2.2 million new teachers over the next decade.

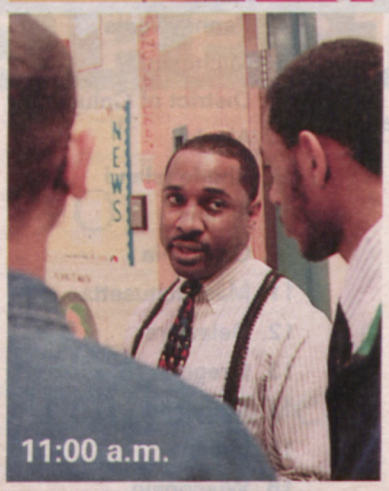
Third, other professions pay far more for similarly qualified people.

But good arguments alone rarely carry the day. And that's why NEA affiliates are pulling out all the stops to elect pro-education candidates and reach out to parents and other groups for support.

In Pawling, New York, an extraordinary effort has led to a remarkable contract for both teachers and ESP.

For years, Pawling had the lowest teacher salaries in its county. Finally, teachers and teacher aides in the Pawling Education Association decided enough was enough. Activists in the

Chris Johnson isn't just the teacher of the year at West Millbrook Middle School. He also drives the bus.



After his part-time job as bus driver and his full-time job as teacher, there's still more to do: Christopher Johnson is also a graduate student.

115-person local descended on a school board meeting with an informational picket. Supporters helped follow up with more picketing, car signs, petitions, and a steady stream of letters to the local newspaper.

The parent role was key.

"It made us feel so good when the parents joined us," said guidance counselor Karen Nolan. "We felt we weren't crazy."

The eventual result: a five-year contract with raises averaging 40 percent.

In Texas, the legislature gave teachers $3,000 raises after a hard campaign led by the Texas State Teachers Association. TSTA President Ignacio Salinas Jr., himself a legislator, offers this advice: "Educate legislators, don't just lobby them. Don't assume they know what's happening in your classroom."

Chris Johnson's state, North Carolina, moved from 38th to 29th place in NEA's salary rankings last year. North Carolina Association of Educators President Geraldine McNeill says NCAE's support for high teaching standards has strengthened its hand.

Thanks in significant part to NCAE efforts to help candidates for National Board certification, North Carolina now has more nationally certified teachers than any other state. NCAE members get heard when they argue that teacher quality will sink without higher pay.

"A third of us are eligible to retire," McNeill says. "Parents realize you can pay now or pay later. My own daughter fell behind in sixth grade because she had no math teacher for half a year."

North Carolina teacher salaries are now approaching the national average, but, to attract enough Chris Johnsons to the profession, salaries must go substantially higher, in North Carolina and across the nation. ✔

than other college-educated Americans with comparable academic preparation.

For 30 years, teacher salaries have barely kept pace with inflation, even though the economy depends more and more on educated workers.

Average teacher pay has risen just 8.6 percent over inflation since 1970, a mere third of a percent per year. Over those same years, the percentage of teachers with master's degrees has doubled and average teacher experience is up five years.

Most education support personnel —men and women who are essential to keeping schools running smoothly —face even a tougher salary squeeze.

Other countries don't squeeze their educators. America's major competitors pay teachers more, relative to average incomes in their countries, than teachers in the United States.

Some nations even pay educators more in absolute terms. South Korea, says the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, pays mid-career teachers 30 percent more than the United States.

NEA affiliates all across America are currently fighting to reverse these trends. One example: Christopher Johnson's NEA state affiliate, the North Carolina Association of Educators, has won passage of a four-year program to raise salaries to the national average.

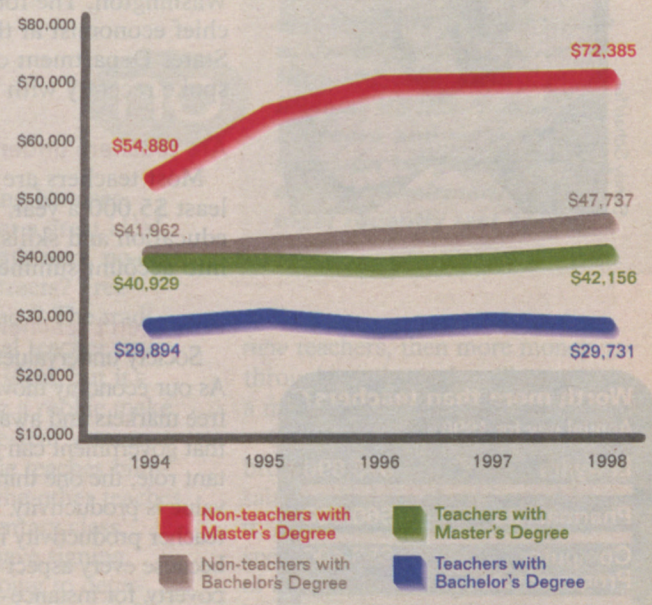
Indeed, Chris Johnson probably wouldn't still be teaching today if it hadn't been for the annual $3,000 raises this new program has delivered.

"Last summer, I looked into other professions, but with the raises, I stayed in," he said. "Three years ago, I would have had to leave." ✔

The High Cost of Teaching

The earnings gap between teachers and other college graduates widened substantially during the late 1990s. By 1998, teachers with masters degrees earned an average of $30,000 less than their peers.

Left Behind



NOTE: All figures are represented in 1998 dollars to control for inflation. SOURCE: Education Week analysis of U.S. Census Bureau's 1992-1999 "Current Population Survey-March Supplement."

ESP: Just as Underpaid

Some categories of school employees are among the lowest paid government workers. In comparison, the federal poverty line for a family of four is $17,050.

JOB GROUP

Building/grounds Maintenance & Repairs
$23,710

Food Services
$13,360

Health & Student Services
$22,343

Paraeducators: Instructional & Non-Instructional
$15,592

Secretarial/Clerical/Administrative Services
$23,488

Security Services
$31,352

Technical Services
$39,516

Trades, Crafts, Machine Operators
$35,914

Transportation & Delivery/Vehicle Mechanics
$23,749

Total U.S. Full-time ESP Labor Force
$21,702

NEA estimates of the average annual 1999-2000 salary for full time ESP: those who work 30 hours or more per week.

Sandy Schaeffer

Worth more than teachers?
Annual pay for 1998

Lawyers	$75,890
Pharmacists	$60,090
Computer Programmers	$53,400
Dental Hygienists	$46,570
Accountants and auditors	$41,880

Q&A

Salaries: An Economist's View

Jared Bernstein is a labor economist with the Economic Policy Institute in Washington. The former deputy chief economist at the United States Department of Labor, he spoke recently with *NEA Today*.

Are teachers underpaid?

Most teachers are underpaid at least $5,000 a year, based on their education and skills, even taking into account summers off.

Why aren't teachers paid more?

Society undervalues what they do. As our economy moves more toward free markets and away from the idea that government can play an important role, the one thing that defines value is productivity. But measuring teacher productivity is very difficult because every aspect of society—poverty, for instance—has an impact on learning.

Another factor is gender discrimination, since teaching has traditionally been a female profession.

What do low salaries for educators mean for the nation?

The primary consequence of these low salaries is an undersupply of skilled persons. The idea of leaving teaching to sympathetic-hearted people to supply the labor for schools has proven to be the wrong path, especially in an economy in which salaries are climbing sharply for other educated workers.

What will it take to raise salaries?

A strong union is really important, because when you're trying to define the worth of what you're doing, in a climate where the market economy is idealized, you need articulate spokespersons.

Also, we need to restructure how education is financed. The fact that districts depend on property taxes is a formula for inequity. It's easy to find schools where we would all love to send our kids, and others where we would be horrified. Poor schools pay low salaries, so the lack of quality is reinforced. ✔

For Better Pay, Alliances Pay Off

Things didn't look good for NEA members in Omaha last September. Contract talks on the pay hike they were seeking seemed to be dragging endlessly.

But the Omaha Education Association turned that bad situation around, and how it did demonstrates a principle used by many successful NEA affiliates: Don't go it alone!

Teachers in Omaha had a strong case for higher pay. With nearly half of the current staff set to retire over the next decade, the district needs to attract new teachers.

That will be difficult. Test scores in Omaha may be high, but Omaha salaries are only slightly above the Nebraska average—and the state ranks 43rd in the nation.

"I've got this year's bills, but last year's salary," as one teacher, Geri Wilson, put it.

Omaha's NEA local affiliate pressed these points in some 100 hours of negotiating with school officials, but made little real progress.

That's when the teachers decided to add pressure to logic and reasonableness.

OEA organized a rally at a Board of Education meeting, hoping to turn out 400 people and show the board teachers meant business.

"We didn't want to slap the board members, but we did want to raise their awareness," says OEA President Liz Rea, a high school teacher.

OEA's crowd prediction proved way off. More than 1,200 educators and local residents showed up.

"Omahans do not want mediocrity for their children," Rea told the board to cheers. "They want quality."

Rea's words packed more punch because she was clearly speaking out on behalf of Omahans, not just teachers.

The people packing the board chamber that night included members of local unions representing nurses, security guards, secretaries, and painters.

Their appearance was no coincidence. OEA has been cooperating with other unions for years. Last spring, teachers took part in a rally for an AFL-CIO organizing drive.

The crowd at the board meeting also included parents, students, and two state senators. OEA is active in politics and in an Omaha community coalition. The local even publishes a community newsletter.

All that spadework paid off at the Board of Ed rally and in a steady bombardment of E-mails, letters to the editor, and calls to radio talk shows that kept the heat on afterwards.

The result: a one-year contract with average raises amounting to 5.6 percent, far above those of recent years.

Her local, says OEA's Rea, will be back for more.

"We're not there yet," she says, "not by a long shot."

Average Salaries of Public School Teachers, 1998-99

1. Connecticut	$51,584
2. New Jersey	$51,193*
3. New York	$49,437*
4. Pennsylvania	$48,457
5. Michigan	$48,207*
6. District of Columbia	$47,150*
7. Alaska	$46,845
8. Rhode Island	$45,650
9. Illinois	$45,569
10. California	$45,400*
11. Massachusetts	$45,075*
12. Delaware	$43,164
13. Oregon	$42,833
14. Maryland	$42,526
15. Indiana	$41,163
16. Wisconsin	$40,657
National Average	**$40,582***
17. Ohio	$40,566
18. Hawaii	$40,377
19. Georgia	$39,675
20. Minnesota	$39,458
21. Nevada	$38,883
22. Washington	$38,692
23. Colorado	$38,025*
24. Virginia	$37,475*
25. Kansas	$37,405
26. New Hampshire	$37,405
27. Vermont	$36,800*
28. Tennessee	$36,500*
29. North Carolina	$36,098
30. Florida	$35,916
31. Alabama	$35,820
32. Kentucky	$35,526
33. Texas	$35,041
34. Arizona	$35,025*
35. Iowa	$34,927
36. Maine	$34,906
37. Missouri	$34,746
38. South Carolina	$34,506
39. West Virginia	$34,244
40. Idaho	$34,063
41. Wyoming	$33,500
42. Utah	$32,950*
43. Nebraska	$32,880
44. Louisiana	$32,510
45. New Mexico	$32,398
46. Arkansas	$32,350*
47. Montana	$31,356
48. Oklahoma	$31,149*
49. Mississippi	$29,530
50. North Dakota	$28,976
51. South Dakota	$28,552

* estimated

Should districts offer signing bonuses to attract new teachers?

VIRGINIA HOOVER ***is a school social worker with 11 years in the Guilford, North Carolina schools. She was the state's School Social Worker of the Year in 1997-98 and the Student Services Support of the Year in 1999.***

yes

Yes, I believe school systems should offer a sign-on bonus to staff. A bonus would definitely be an added attraction to new employees, whether they are graduating from college or just trying to get into education.

For new graduates, a bonus would help offset the expense of preparing their first classroom. Buying the materials and supplies needed to make classrooms inviting and exciting places for students can take a lot of money.

If a new teacher has to relocate to take the job, that's another expense. A bonus could relieve the stress of moving and help make the transition a more pleasant experience.

For the more seasoned staff person, a sign-on bonus would be a great help in meeting the expenses that come with taking a new job.

Many times, when a staff person accepts a new position in another system, the person ends up missing time from work. That time lost means less income. A bonus could help save a staff person from having to go deeper into debt after a job change.

What a relief it could be to have this extra money. I have a friend who recently accepted a position in another state. She and I discussed the burden that would have been lifted if the system had offered her a sign-on bonus. Moving expenses can be very taxing, especially if you're not in a superintendent's position.

The gesture of offering a bonus would also benefit the school system that makes the offer. It's a win-win situation. A bonus, once accepted by the new staff person, serves as a commitment to work for the school system—and helps prevent a staff person from going out the backdoor to accept a position with another system.

With a bonus in the balance, a school system wouldn't have to worry about whether a newly hired staff person is going to show.

On the other side, a staff person is going to think long and hard about leaving a school system that helped when help was most needed. Bonuses would help retain good and experienced staff.

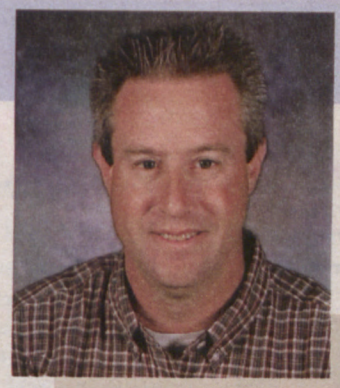
A sign-on bonus would keep school systems from having to scramble in August to fill vacant positions. Scrambling school systems often just accept whoever is available at the last minute. With the sign-on bonus as an attraction, a system could have the best upon finding the best.

Staff, meanwhile, are seeking systems that are willing to offer something extra. A sign-on bonus would be an added recruiting incentive.

We need that incentive. With so much competition for graduating college students, districts need some added attraction to help fill the positions being vacated by our retiring educators.

As for me personally, I have no problem with systems offering such a sign-on bonus perk to attract capable people to education. I'm concerned about who will fill my role as social worker when I retire.

I won't be offended if my system begins offering a sign-on bonus to new staff. Those of us who are working hard pulling the load until vacant positions are filled would welcome the sight of quality applicants swarming to get those vacant jobs. ✔



BOB KAPLAN ***teaches eighth grade social studies at Jane Addams Junior High in Schaumburg, Illinois. He has taught for 23 years and served four times on bargaining teams, once as chairman, and most recently last spring.***

no

Signing bonuses. What a great idea! What's next, no-cut contracts? Free agency? The traditional teacher pay scale may not be ideal, but it's fairer than having a rookie make more than a three-year veteran because the rookie teaches bilingual classes and the other teaches a multi-age elementary class.

If we were to have signing bonuses, who's going to determine what's more important for a bonus? Who's going to figure out how much of a bonus is deserved? Whatever happened to collective bargaining?

I can easily see a personnel director paying the extra dollars to fill a position. I can also foresee the same personnel director using these extra dollars as a backdoor to merit pay.

Our Association needs to represent all members. These first-year teachers aren't even members yet. How, as a labor organization, can we explain to our members in their second or third year, "Gee, sorry you were too late for a bonus, but remember to keep paying your dues dollars!"

Instead of offering signing bonuses, let's try to solve the underlying problem. If there are positions that are tough to fill, let's build the supply. How? Through academic advising in colleges and government financial support for students going into high-demand fields.

These steps, along with increased teacher pay throughout the salary schedule, would help increase the supply of new teachers. If more money will get better *new* teachers, then more money throughout the scale will serve as a motivator for *all* teachers.

Collective bargaining has brought us dramatically increased salaries, and we should stand by it. Any measure that would give special treatment to any segment of our members ought to be analyzed very closely.

I realize signing bonuses have been around for a long time in business and sports. But products in these fields are more measurable. I'm a much better teacher now than I was 23 years ago. Why don't we give me a bonus for that?

New teachers who have yet to step into the classroom are a risky investment. What is their average length of employment? What if these new teachers have difficulty and are released?

I guess we shouldn't worry. We'll just sign up some other untested new teacher with a signing bonus.

One final point: We already have huge salary discrepancies between school districts. Signing bonuses would increase those discrepancies. Wealthy districts would have much more money to dole out for bonuses than less affluent districts.

If signing bonuses become the rule, the rich will get richer, the poor will be stuck with vacancies. This isn't what public education should be all about.

Signing bonuses, on the surface, sound good. Administrators would love to fill tough positions by throwing money to a few.

But before we should even consider signing bonuses, we need standards and an effort to increase the supply for hard-to-fill positions. Let's use all this bonus money to reward teachers who have made and will continue to make a positive difference. ✔

What's Your Opinion?

Should districts offer signing bonuses to attract new teachers?
To vote, check the Web at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should new teachers get the toughest assignments?
The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today:*
11% Yes **89% No**

Photos by Fanning/Howey Associates, Inc.

A Matter of Principal: School Bonds Without the Interest

Never heard of a Qualified Zone Academy Bond? The 'QZAB' is a smarter way to pay for school renovation—and a model for the future.

If you think a QZAB is some kind of cotton swab, that ignorance could cost your district some sorely needed dollars for school renovation. The federal Qualified Zone Academy Bond program, created by Congress in 1997, makes $400 million in zero-interest bonds available to districts each year for the creation of "academies" housed in school building additions or rehabbed facilities—along with needed equipment, curriculum, and staff training.

Academies, in this sense, are schools or programs within a school that enter into partnerships with local businesses to enhance the curriculum, increase graduation and employment rates, and better prepare students for college or the workforce.

The QZAB program, recently extended by Congress through 2001, is based on a time-honored concept: investment through tax breaks.

The program is also based on simplicity. Holders of 15-year QZABs get annual federal income tax credits equal to a percentage of the face value of the bonds, sparing school districts from paying interest. And the program is flexible enough to include other types of financing, like zero-interest bank loans.

QZAB guidelines currently restrict this program to federally defined empowerment zones, enterprise communities, or school sites where at least 35 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Eligible districts must now also line up private partners for QZAB academies.

But, with a few less restrictions and a lot more federal money, QZAB-type bonds could make a critical difference to school districts at all "income levels."

Jeffrey Baratta, a San Francisco investment banker who structures QZAB programs, stresses that QZABs "require little government intervention at the least amount of cost to taxpayers."

All a district needs, Baratta explains, is a bonding allocation from the state, a

YOUR DUES DID IT

■ **Preparing for the Unthinkable. . .** The new *NEA Crisis Communications Guide and Toolkit* is designed to help NEA affiliates prepare for and respond to tragic events, both natural and human-made. Drawing on the experience and lessons of affiliates that have experienced crises, these materials include advice on drafting crisis prevention plans, creating efficient internal communications, working with the media, dealing with post-traumatic stress, and even managing memorial services. NEA is now producing an accompanying CD-ROM and Web site to make the guide and toolkit more readily available. For more information, contact Rebecca Fleischauer at 202/822-7268.

■ **Good News About Public Schools. . .** is now on the NEA Web site, complete with the latest encouraging information from your state and links to other sites, from the Harris Poll to the National Center for Education Statistics. Point your browser to www.nea.org/publiced/goodnews/. ✔

15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

■ **The Goal:** Build support in Congress for House and Senate bills to make interest-free school modernization bonds available to states and districts—and for an additional Administration proposal to make $1.3 billion in grants and loans available to high-needs districts for urgent and emergency school repairs.

■ **Your Assignments:**

• Urge your House members and senators to co-sponsor both the interest-free bond legislation (Bills H.R. 1660, H.R. 1760, and S. 1454) and the grant/loan proposal for high-needs districts (Bills H.R. 3705 and S. 2124).

• Help build a school modernization coalition in your community and urge local and state officials to tell Congress of the need for federal support for school modernization.

■ **Here's how to get started:** Ready to become a cyber-lobbyist for school modernization? You can find all you need to make your voice heard online at www.nea.org.lac/modern. ✔

Are modern schools like these just a dream in your district? That might be because your taxpayers aren't wild about paying off interest on school bonds. That's why NEA backs federal legislation to create zero-interest bonds for school rehabilitation and construction.

spending plan, and a "commitment letter" from private partners chosen by the district, who must pledge a donation equaling 10 percent of bond proceeds.

That gift can be in the form of anything from cash and equipment to volunteer mentors and student internships.

"This helps build community support for schools," says NEA lobbyist Joel Packer, "and the zero-interest concept makes it easier to pass a bond issue."

If all this QZAB business is news to you, you probably live in one of the many states that haven't taken advantage of this highly creative program.

"Check to see if your state education authorities have made QZAB allocations to local schools," advises Packer. "If not, lobby them to get on the ball, and get your school district to apply for a QZAB before it loses the opportunity."

QZAB funds allocated in 2000, Packer points out, must be loaned by the end of 2002, and those allocated in 2001 must be loaned by the end of 2003.

And while you're in the lobbying mode, help NEA push to make QZAB-type bonds more widely available—with fewer strings—for school renovation, technology upgrades, and new construction.

NEA strongly supports school modernization bills introduced in the House by Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) and Nancy Johnson (R-Conn.), and in the Senate by Chuck Robb (D-Va.). These bills—H.R. 1660, H.R. 1760, and S. 1454—would leverage a $3.1 billion federal investment over five years into $25 billion in zero-interest school modernization bonds, distributed to states for use by local school districts.

"This tax credit mechanism would come with little cost to the federal government and relieve districts of 50 percent of the cost of building and modernizing schools," stresses Robert Canavan, chair of the broad-based Rebuild America's Schools coalition.

So important is this legislation that Rebuild America's Schools—uniting education unions, school administrator groups, school boards, rural education coalitions, and even the American Institute of Architects—is pulling out the stops to get it passed by Congress.

In the front ranks of this lobbying offensive is one very influential "Rebuild" affiliate: NEA.

"Nobody can document the profound needs of schools better than NEA," stresses Canavan. "We desperately need the help of NEA members." ✔

What You Can Do:

You can help NEA's lobbying team push for federal school modernization legislation by telling your story. Describe the current condition of your school or classroom and what it would take to make it a 21st-century learning center.

E-mail your thoughts and photos to myschool@list.nea.org or send them to My School, NEA Government Relations, Room 510, Washington, DC 20036-3290. Fax: 202/822-7741. They'll be posted at www.nea.org/lac/modern.

For more details about Qualified Zone Academy Bond rules and allocations to states, go to www.ed.gov/inits/ construction/qzab.html.

Stop dreaming about modern schools like this and start lobbying! Tell NEA what your school or classroom needs to be a 21st-century learning center—and we'll share your priorities with Congress.

Heroes & Zeroes

▲ First, an Illinois hero: On National ESP Day last November 17, Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White issued a proclamation that cited education support personnel for partnering with teachers, administrators, and parents in the "creation of a caring, safe, and clean learning environment dedicated to high academic standards." And the secretary officially commended Illinois ESP for their "important role in the creation and preservation of efficient and effective public institutions of learning."

▼ Now, an Illi-nil: As if his $7 billion state agency were a helpless bystander, Illinois State School Superintendent Max McGee said recently he would consider private school tuition vouchers as a tool to help some kids "escape" districts that don't perform well academically. "There are only a handful of Illinois districts that can be labeled the 'worst,'" notes Illinois Education Association President Anne Davis. "McGee and his 750-employee education agency have the expertise to shore up a few districts, don't they?"

▲ Gloria Miller, a teacher at Southeast Technical Institute in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has been honored by the South Dakota Education Association for her countless good works, everything from providing a safe haven for throwaway kids to helping homeless and transient folks get their GEDs and prepare for the job market. This NEA member has "dedicated her life to making the Sioux Falls area a better place, and we can all be proud," says SDEA President Elaine Roberts.

▼ When recently asked how to "deal with the teachers' union," Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating joked, "Homicide." The governor later apologized to members of the Oklahoma Education Association, but OEA President Carolyn Crowder notes that a teacher could be fired for publicly making such a comment—and reminds Keating that NEA is more than an organization or an agenda. "We're Democrats, Republicans, Sunday school teachers, chamber of commerce members, and community volunteers," Crowder stresses.

Raising the Stakes in the Bay State

Knowing there's a better way, Massachusetts NEA members draft their own blueprint for education reform.

Educators in Hanover, Massachusetts, know they're doing quality work. The student dropout rate in this district, just south of Boston, is extremely low and most graduates go on to college.

"Better yet," says sixth grade teacher Anne Wass, "recent graduates tell Hanover High teachers and counselors that it was harder in high school than in their first year of college!"

And Hanover isn't unique. Statewide, Massachusetts students tend to stay in school and score high on standardized tests. They rank fourth nationally in reading and sixth in math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and last year 31 percent of them scored in the advanced category of the Iowa Third Grade Reading Test.

Yet, curiously, last year 0 percent scored in the advanced category of the Bay State's own Grade 4 English Language Arts test, part of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)—a 13-hour, pencil-and-paper test administered each year to fourth, eighth, and tenth graders.

Laura Barrett

With her colleagues across Massachusetts, Anne Wass is urging the public to "ask a teacher" how to make public schools better.

Something just isn't adding up.

The roots of the current situation go back to the 1993 passage of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act. Since then, teachers in districts like Hanover have been working overtime to implement the law.

Teachers are taking part in more professional development activities in order to recertify. They're creating curricula to match new state learning standards and preparing their students for the tough new MCAS tests.

"We know what works and what doesn't to improve student learning. And we will be heard."

—The Massachusetts Teachers Association's *Teachers' Blueprint For Educational Excellence*

Yet, with teachers working harder than ever and student performance on national exams rising, poor results on the MCAS tests have led some public officials to question teacher competence and to label public schools as "failing."

Massachusetts teachers, for their part, have mounting concerns about the MCAS tests themselves. They charge that some of the exams are not age-appropriate and that all of them take up too much instructional time.

In many districts, teachers point out, field trips and innovative programs are being swapped for test preparation.

But the biggest problem may be the negative impact the MCAS high school exit exam will soon have on children, especially low-income, minority, special needs, and voc ed students.

As of 2003, students who fail the Grade 10 math and English tests will not be able to graduate, even if they have good grades, excellent attendance, and decent scores on other standardized tests.

The impact could be huge—last year, more than half of all tenth graders failed the math test alone.

Because of these concerns, the Massachusetts Teachers Association recently came out against using the MCAS tests to determine which students may graduate from high school.

MTA also opposes "rating" schools

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"The people in charge of Massachusetts public schools are the same ones who have been saying the system should be replaced by some vague combination of charter schools and vouchers. It seems to me that these people have a dramatic conflict of interest because, in essence, they have a stake in the reform effort failing. If it fails, it will vindicate their viewpoint and give them the opportunity to input their privatization agenda."

—Comments in the Boston Globe *from Jack Rennie, president of the Massachusetts Business Education Alliance and an architect of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993*

THE BOTTOM LINE

PRIVATE SCHOOLS: More than $100 million from public revenues would flow to Virginia's wealthiest families if a tuition tax credit proposal pending before state lawmakers were enacted. For more: www.pfaw.org/news/press/show.cgi?article=950041989.

PRISONS: Over 2 million Americans are now behind bars, a tenfold increase in the U.S. prison population since 1960. A quarter of the world's prisoners are now Americans. For more: http://sun.soci.niu.edu/~critcrim/prisons/prisons.html.

BUDGET SURPLUS: Less than a third of America's children eligible for Title I assistance are now served. Yet nearly three out of four fourth-graders read below grade level, reports Invest in America. For more: www.ombwatch.org/ia/IIAsign-on.html.

FEDERAL AID: The latest White House budget proposal to Congress includes $1 billion for 21st Century Learning Centers—safe places to learn during after-school and summer hours. For more: www.childrensdefense.org/budget/clintonbudget2001.html.

based solely on test scores. Instead, the state NEA affiliate supports multiple measures of achievement for both students and schools.

Student testing isn't the only battle NEA members are facing in Massachusetts. Governor Paul Cellucci is demanding that veteran teachers be required to pass a literacy and subject matter test—or lose their jobs.

Most recently, the governor proposed to test all math teachers in schools with low MCAS scores, a sure-fire way to discourage good math teachers from applying for jobs in inner-city schools.

What's heightening conflict in Massachusetts is a widespread sense that the governor and his state Board of Education are more interested in running a fiercely ideological agenda than talking with real classroom teachers.

None of the nine state board members is a K-12 teacher or administrator and, worse, a majority of board members vocally support a strong privatization agenda that is well served by a "manufactured crisis" in public education.

Four of the board members are directly affiliated with the Pioneer Institute, a pro-privatization think tank. State Board of Ed Chairman James Peyser doubles as executive director of the Pioneer Institute, where he works diligently to advance the spread of for-profit charter schools.

"We have political leaders far removed from the classroom imposing their ideas on public schools, with little genuine input from teachers," charges Massachusetts Teachers Association President Stephen E. Gorrie.

But NEA members in Massachusetts are fighting back. More than a year ago—under the slogan: "Ask a teacher how to make public schools work better"—MTA launched an ambitious new program to improve education.

Besides aggressive media outreach on issues like class size reduction and school modernization, the "Ask a Teacher" campaign features:

- **Grassroots mobilization,** through local Ask a Teacher coordinating committees and issue training for MTA members at local and regional meetings.
- **Large-scale in-district lobbying meetings** with lawmakers. "In my town, Hanover, we've decided that we'll keep going in to talk to our legislators, even when there isn't a crisis," says Anne Wass, an MTA executive board member.
- **A mass "Ask a Teacher Rally"** on Boston Common last June, that drew 20,000 NEA and AFT members.

Ralliers, many ringing handbells, carried signs publicizing the importance of smaller class sizes and special programs for disruptive students.

"Our younger members were just in awe of this display of solidarity," notes Wass, "and legislators were surprised so many people turned out. They're more respectful of teachers now!"

- **A member-driven Teachers' Blueprint for Educational Excellence,** a seven-point program for real education reform that was recently distributed to legislators and organizations like the state PTA. This working manual spotlights pressing educational needs like curbing the "institutional hazing" of new teachers and "centrally involving" teachers in shaping educational practices in their schools through collective bargaining and other means.

The *Blueprint* will serve as a basis for both legislative proposals and local bargaining demands. MTA members see it as a "living document," says Wass, that "will be revised and updated every three to four years." ✔

For more information, go to www.massteacher.org.

PRESS CLIPS

Oklahoma NEA Members Rally

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From the *Tulsa World*, February 17, 2000:

"Taking her cue from TV talk show host David Letterman, Oklahoma Education Association President Carolyn Crowder gave [more than 25,000] cheering teachers the top 10 reasons yesterday to rally for more funding. Crowder finally reached Reason No. 1: 'Well-educated people are what industries look for when considering relocation to a state.'"

"Teachers from Woodward to Catoosa flocked to the capital in support of a $3,000 pay raise, but Crowder made it clear that educators need to keep the heat on legislators for more education funding.

"'It's been 10 years since we last had an investment in education,' she said, 'We can't wait another 10 years. We need an investment every single year.'" ✔

BASICS FOR BEGINNERS

Dealing With Disruptive Behavior

To reduce minor behavior problems in class, the British Columbia (Canada) Federation of Teachers' *Beginning Teachers' Handbook* suggests these strategies for "dealing with behavior in the least amount of time, with the least disruption and negative feeling":

- **Proximity.** Continuing your lesson while you move about the room, and pausing near "trouble spots," can let the students know that even though they aren't near the teacher's desk, they are still expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior. Your getting "boxed in" behind your desk or podium encourages misbehavior in far corners of the room.
- **Pauses.** Continuous teacher talk may give students a noise screen for their own conversations. An occasional pause—just a few seconds of silence—brings an off-task student back in focus.
- **Asking for a Response.** Hearing your own name can be an attention-getter, even if you're a student not paying attention. Working an off-task student's name into a question can often bring the student back into the lesson.

Say the student's name first in order to allow that student to hear the question to be answered. The purpose is to get the student back into the lesson, not to embarrass.

- **Active Participation.** Having the student respond to a question or become involved in an activity can eliminate the undesired behavior. Asking for a show of hands, having students perform a physical activity, or having each student write a quick answer to a question can make all students accountable for an immediate response. *(For more advice, go to www.bctf.bc.ca/beginning/handbook.)* ✔

ADMINISTRATORS: Some 12 percent of U.S. school superintendents are now women, a rate triple the 1985 level. Only 5 percent are from minority groups, says a new study, *The U.S. School Superintendent: The Invisible CEO.* For more info, E-mail iel@iel.org.

HISPANIC STUDENTS: Over the past quarter century, college attendance rates for Hispanic women have nearly tripled, from 7.5 to 22.2 percent. The college attendance rates of Hispanic men have about doubled. For more: www.hacu.net.

THE PROFESSION: More than 10 percent of college freshmen overall—16 percent of women and 6 percent of men—are now interested in teaching as a career, the highest level of interest in more than 30 years. For more: www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/.

BEGINNING TEACHERS: Some 15 states now have formal induction programs for new teachers. Similar programs are in the works in nine other states, notes the Council of Chief State School Officers. For more: www.ccsso.org/pdfs/spppr.PDF.

There's No Safe Alternative

Facing a privatization threat, New York State bus drivers take their best selling point—devotion to child safety—to the community.

No private company could ever match what the 175 transportation employees of New York State's Kenmore-Tonawanda (Ken-Ton) district bring to the job: pride in a safety record unmarred by a single fatality, an eagerness to visit schools to teach and drill kids on bus safety, and a willingness—as public employees—to submit to taxpayer scrutiny.

Nor could an outside firm offer a workforce so deeply committed to this community. More than 90 percent of Ken-Ton's drivers, subs, and bus attendants live in the district—where they raise kids, belong to community groups, and volunteer as firefighters.

Yet, for all their dedication, these NEA members face the real possibility that Ken-Ton transportation services could be contracted out to a private company.

Using funding from the pro-privatization administration of New York Governor George Pataki, the Ken-Ton district has engaged a consulting firm, the Transportation Advisory Service, to examine possible "alternatives" to in-house transportation.

This firm has a track record of issuing reports that recommend privatization—smack in the middle of school district contract bargaining. And, you guessed it, contract talks are now under way in Ken-Ton.

But leaders of the 675-member Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda School Employees Association (KTSEA) aren't just waiting for the other shoe to drop. They're acting to stop privatization before it starts.

"We've asked each transportation employee to gather the names, addresses, and phone numbers of five district residents who could be influential in any battle against privatization," says local President Pete Elinski. "We're building a database of supporters to contact to attend meetings—and looking to expand that base."

This NEA ESP local is also gathering support from other area labor unions and working to educate parents about its members' fierce dedication to safety.

At a January meeting with local PTA leaders, KTSEA activists explained how these experienced members manage to drive 7,000 students 900,000 miles a year without a single fatality.

With TV camera crews recording the scene, these NEA members awed the PTA parents with in-depth descriptions of their pick-up and exiting procedures. They explained their hand signals for road crossings—and talked about their bus evacuation drills and the training they take on safety equipment, everything from two-way radios to kick-out windows.

Photos by Mike Groll

Driver Starr Picchione, above, and her local president, Pete Elinski, below right, have been talking up bus safety measures in the Ken-Ton school district.

"I stressed that our drivers are highly experienced, committed to safety needs, and dedicated to kids—and I warned that safety would fall off if our work was contracted out," notes Elinski, a head custodian.

"We received very positive feedback afterwards," he adds. "PTA members told us that we had planted 'seeds of thought' in the parents."

If it sounds like Ken-Ton ESP are following some sort of anti-privatization textbook, that's because they are. They're using tactics straight from *Organizing the Offense: Campaigning Against Privatization,* a manual used to help NEA affiliate staff and leaders become part of a national cadre of privatization experts.

The manual has helped Ken-Ton support staff take the offensive.

Report Card

NAME	GRADE	COMMENTS
Staff of the Mid-Michigan Public School Academy	A+	Welcome aboard! Teachers at the Academy, the state's largest charter school, have voted by nearly 3-1 to join the 148,000-member Michigan Education Association. "Teachers came to us because they want to be heard on issues that affect their teaching and learning environment," reports MEA organizer David Crim.
Lee County (Florida) School District	F	Stay away. The Florida Teaching Profession-NEA urges teaching applicants to avoid this district until its teachers ratify a new contract. FTP-NEA cites Lee County for "regressive, oppressive, and unfair labor tactics" and its "apparent indifference and insensitivity to professional needs and economic rights."
Israel Teachers Union	A	Following an 11-day general strike, ITU members have won a 5 percent raise and an agreement that teacher salaries will be checked annually by a new "experts' committee"—to ensure that they are linked to salaries of engineers in the Israeli public sector.

THE BOTTOM LINE

HUNGER: The United States is the only industrialized country with widespread hunger, with 31 million people facing food scarcity. One in 10 households cannot afford the food they need. For more: www.bread.org/media/index.html.

INTERNET: About two-thirds of America's classrooms are now connected to cyberspace, a big leap from the one in seven connected in 1996. The connection rate in poor districts: 39 percent. For more: www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000086.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES: Are low-income families in your town receiving the tax breaks available to them? The federal Earned Income Tax Credit can add up to $3,800 to the paychecks of low-wage workers. For more: www.cbpp.org/eic2000/index.html.

WEALTH: The net worth of U.S. households led by adults under 60 actually declined in the 1990s. Families headed by forty-somethings were worth $79,000 in 1989, $54,000 in 1999. For more: www.newswise.com/articles/2000/2/STAFFORD.UMI.html.

"Being proactive is the best medicine," says cadre member Mark Perez, a UniServ director and former custodian. "And the best way for ESP to be proactive is by building bridges to teachers, the community, and the school system."

The NEA anti-privatization manual stresses the importance of developing a pre-emptive local action plan and articulating the negative impact of privatization on individual employees, the local Association, and the community.

The manual also helps expose the myths used to justify contracting out school support services.

Among those myths, notes lead NEA cadre trainer Paul McBride, is the claim that privatization is simply about "cost effectiveness."

"Privatization is *not* about saving money," he stresses, "it's about management power, political patronage, and outright union busting."

"Don't talk about numbers when confronting a privatization threat," advises McBride, a retired ESP program director for the New Jersey Education Association and a veteran of the privatization wars.

"Don't try to outbid the school board to provide support services," he adds. "You're playing on their court and you'll *lose.* Rather, you've got to convince the community and other school staffers about the service cuts at stake.

A typical privatization proposal, McBride notes, only addresses the obvious tasks that ESP perform.

"The school board doesn't know about the rest," he explains, "but parents will recognize a cut in service when the driver picking up little Jimmy is no longer a district resident who lives down the street."

Parents will also notice inattention to safety details.

"The only Western New York school district to have an elementary bus fatality in the last 10 years—in Erie County—used contracted bus service," notes 16-year Ken-Ton driver Starr Picchione. "We Ken-Ton drivers take great pride in our safety record. We provide the best service out there!"

"Because NEA ESP members tend to live in their districts and belong to local churches and community groups," sums up New York UniServ Rep Tom Nelson, "they have an ability to touch base, to change perceptions in the community. They are NEA's best weapon in the fight against privatization." ✔

"Don't fight contracting out by trying to outbid the school board. Instead, convince the community what service cuts are at stake."

—anti-privatization expert Paul McBride

If you're attending the 2000 NEA National Conference in Atlanta, drop by Paul McBride's April 8 workshop on "Organizing the Offense."

Do'ers Profile

Dan Loftin

POLLY SHELDON

■ ***Name and profession:*** Polly Sheldon, administrative assistant to an assistant superintendent of the Metro Nashville (Tennessee) school district.

■ ***Notable connections:*** Lifelong NEA member since the early 1950s and a governing board member of the Tennessee Teachers Credit Union.

■ ***Accomplishments:*** Sheldon first entered Nashville schools as a substitute teacher in 1945 and then advanced through the office ranks, starting as an elementary school "typist clerk" and progressing to her current job in Metro Nashville's central office.

A superintendent encouraged staff members to be lifelong learners, and Sheldon took that advice to heart. She broadened her skill base and job responsibilities and became a leader in a wide range of professional organizations, including the old secretarial division of the Tennessee Education Association.

Today, Sheldon is even more involved. She encourages support personnel across the country to be active members of NEA's National Council for ESP, and has helped reorganize the Metro Nashville Support Staff Association—which represents ESP on strategic administrative committees and has worked with the administration to reclassify jobs.

■ ***Words of wisdom:*** "As support staff, we should not allow ourselves to be 'departmentalized.' We should be knowledgeable about what's going on in the *entire* school system, not just in our little corner.

"Support personnel are an integral part of any school system. I encourage newcomers to think of themselves as professionals, to have a positive attitude, and to love what they're doing. And I urge all ESP colleagues to belong to professional organizations and to attend workshops, seminars, and other professional development activities."

KUDOS TO. . .

Needles Teachers Make Their Point

■ Following 18 months of negotiations and a four-day strike, the 73-member **Needles (California) Teachers Association** has a new two-year contract. All teachers will get a 3 percent increase retroactive to July 1, 1998, and a 1.41 percent raise for this school year, retroactive to July 1, 1999, while some members will get a salary and benefits package boost of 6.91 percent. Health benefits are maintained at current levels for this year.

■ After privately employed school bus drivers in the **Classified School Employees Council-Las Cruces (New Mexico)** won bargaining recognition in December 1998, they battled to win a first contract and stave off a decertification drive.

Union activists at the Helweg and Farmer Transportation Co. defeated the "decert" attempt this winter and won a contract with a 6 percent increase this year—plus an opportunity for drivers to earn bonuses, a joint committee to search for a better health insurance carrier, and a "letter of intent to file for unemployment" that relieves drivers laid off during school breaks from doing a job search. ✔

DAY CARE COSTS: In 15 states recently surveyed by the National Council of Jewish Women, day care costs for four-year-olds routinely double annual college tuition costs. For more: www.ncjw.org/news/childcare/default.htm.

DAY CARE SOLUTIONS: Over 1.6 million families now get child care help via contracts bargained by unions. Among recent innovations: backup centers for times when normal day care arrangements fall through. For more: www.ffcd.org/labor.htm.

RURAL HOUSING: Over a third of all rural families that rent pay more than 30 percent of income for housing. Some 900,000 rural households are now paying over *half* their income for rent. For more: www.ruralhome.org/pubs/pressreleases/ruralrent.htm.

URBAN HOUSING: The number of kids without a home of their own has increased since 1987, says the Urban Institute. As many as 1.35 million children went homeless in 1996. For more: www.urban.org/news/pressrel/pr000201.html.

RIGHTS WATCH

School Cases Dominate Docket

Supreme Court to decide key First Amendment issues

The High Court is poised to decide four important First Amendment cases that impact schools.

Can public colleges and universities force students to help fund student organizations they don't like?

Can school boards let students pray at high school football games over the public address system?

Can the Boy Scouts expel members and leaders for being gay?

Can public money be used to fund computers, software, library books, and other instructional materials for private and parochial schools?

The Supreme Court will answer these questions before July.

■ In *Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin v. Southworth*, several law students challenged the university's mandatory student activity fee, charging that it helped fund student groups, including the Progressive Student Network and the Student NOW chapter, they found objectionable. Having to pay the $166 fee each semester, the law students argued, violated their rights to free speech and association.

The university argued that the fee program doesn't offend the First Amendment because it subsidizes a wide array of student groups, including groups the plaintiffs supported.

The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the students. But three dissenting judges warned that the ruling threatens academic freedom and could create a precedent enabling other students to seek tuition reimbursement if they don't like the views expressed by particular faculty members.

NEA filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting the university.

■ In *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe*, the Court will decide whether a small school district in Galveston County, Texas can permit student-led prayers over the public address system to open high school football games.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals held that the practice violates the First Amendment's requirement of separation of church and state.

The last time the High Court weighed in on the school prayer issue was 1992, when it prohibited clergy-led graduation prayers in Lee v. Weisman.

Since then, the lower courts have disagreed about the constitutionality of student-led prayers.

■ In *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*, the Court will determine whether the Boy Scouts have a First Amendment right to exclude members and leaders because they're gay.

James Dale was a highly decorated Eagle Scout who later served as assistant scoutmaster in his New Jersey troop. The Boy Scouts expelled him in 1992 after learning that he was gay.

Dale then sued the Boy Scouts, relying on a New Jersey law banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in "places of public accommodation."

The Boy Scouts claimed that the New Jersey law couldn't override the Scouts' First Amendment right to select its own members.

Citing a Supreme Court case upholding a state law ban on sex discrimination in civic clubs, the New Jersey Supreme Court unanimously ruled in Dale's favor.

School districts are the second largest sponsor of Scout troops, and NEA plans to file a friend-of-the-court brief in support of Dale.

■ In *Mitchell v. Helms*, the Court will decide whether a federal aid program that provides religious schools with computers, software, instructional equipment, and library books violates the separation of church and state.

The Court's ruling may have an impact on the question whether private school vouchers violate the Establishment Clause.

With this in mind, the NEA filed a friend-of-the-court brief urging the Court to reaffirm the core First Amendment principle that "public funds cannot be used to support religious activities."

The computers and instructional materials are themselves nonsectarian, the brief argued, but they nevertheless aid religious schools in advancing their avowed sectarian purposes.

Check this space for an update on these decisions next fall.

—Cynthia M. Chmielewski
NEA Office of General Counsel

A state right to discriminate?

Should state employers be exempt from federal laws banning discrimination in the workplace? The U. S. Supreme Court thinks so.

In a landmark 5-4 decision, the High Court ruled last January that state workers—including employees of public colleges and universities—can't sue their employers for violating the federal law against age discrimination. Apparently, a majority of the Court believes that "states' rights" includes the right to discriminate against state workers.

The case, Kimel v. Florida Board of Regents, involved 36 higher ed NEA members from Florida who claimed they were denied salary increases because of their age.

The Supreme Court dismissed the lawsuit, ruling that Congress over-stepped its authority when it prohibited age discrimination by state employers. The Court said the 11th Amendment—which shields state entities from suit in federal court—trumps Congress' power under the Constitution to ban age discrimination.

After Kimel, it's likely that public employers will be able to claim exemption from suit under a host of other federal civil rights laws as well, including: the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and the Equal Pay Act, which bans sex discrimination in pay.

One caveat: the 11th Amendment applies only to "state" employers, such as public colleges and universities. Except for California and Maryland, most courts have ruled that school districts are not entitled to 11th Amendment immunity.

NEA is working with other groups on a bill to make states waive 11th Amendment immunity if they get federal funds.

THE BOTTOM LINE

HUNGER: The United States is the only industrialized country with widespread hunger, with 31 million people facing food scarcity, says Bread for the World. One in 10 households cannot afford the food they need. For more: www.bread.org/media/index.html.

INTERNET ACCESS: Nearly two-thirds of America's classrooms—63 percent—are now connected to the Internet, a huge leap up from 14 percent in 1996. The rate in low-income districts: 39 percent. For more: www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000086.

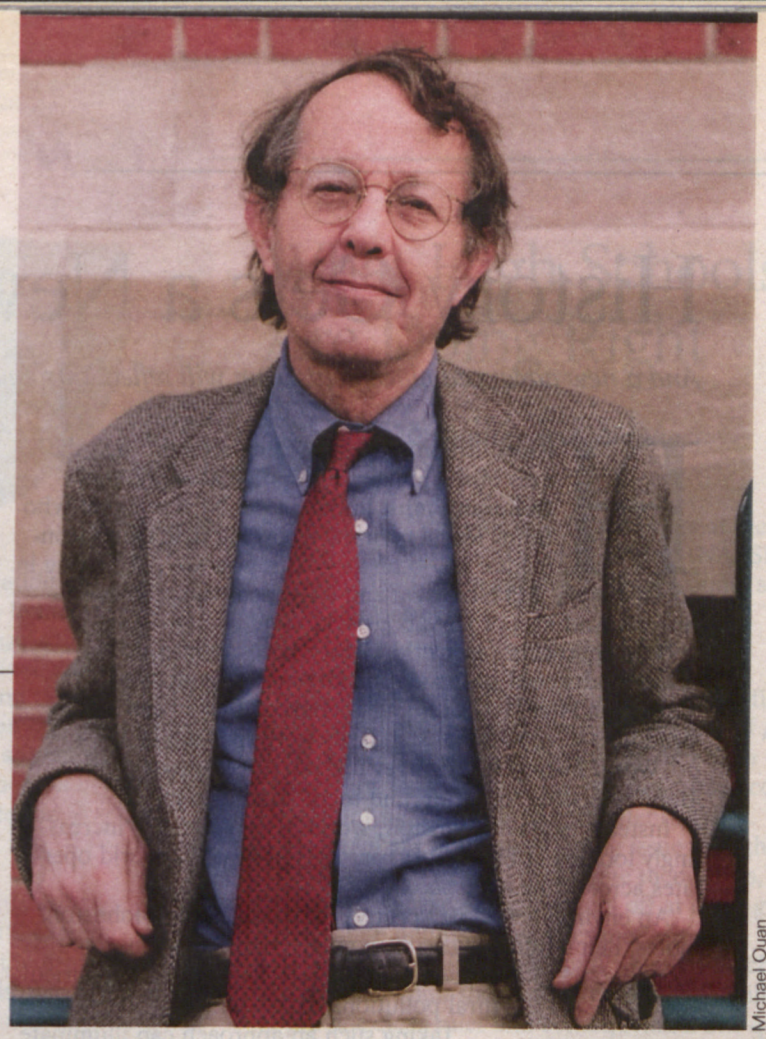
SUPPORTING FAMILIES: Are low-income families in your community receiving all the tax breaks available to them? The federal Earned Income Tax Credit can add up to $3,800 to the paychecks of low-wage workers. For more: www.cbpp.org/eic2000/index.html.

WEALTH: Despite the boom, the net worth of households headed by adults under 60 has fallen. For families headed by forty-somethings, the median was $79,000 in 1989, $54,000 in 1999. For more: www.newswise.com/articles/2000/2/STAFFORD.UMI.html.

INTERVIEW

Jonathan Kozol Kids Who Beat the Odds

A book of hope from the author of *Death at an Early Age*



Michael Quan

For more than 30 years, Jonathan Kozol has used his writing to give voice to the dispossessed of American society. He has ventured where few Americans care to look, let alone spend time—homeless shelters, housing projects, inner city schools—offering unflinching portraits of adults and children facing poverty, racism, and the inequities of American life.

In *Ordinary Resurrections*, scheduled for release in May, Kozol offers us a different kind of book, an uplifting and personal look into the lives of young children in the South Bronx. He spoke recently with *NEA Today*'s Anita Merina.

Q: How is your new book different?
This isn't a book with an agenda. My other books had agendas. *Death at an Early Age* was about racial segregation in schools. *Rachel and her Children* was about the homeless. *Savage Inequalities* was about school finance. *Amazing Grace* was an effort to portray the social and medical conflicts of the poor. This book is the first time I have spent time with a child without wanting to get anything specific from the conversation. I wanted to describe what it was to be a kid in Carmen Suarez' class. By working quietly for nearly five years, I was able to place the spotlight on the part of childhood I find most precious and the part of teaching I find most beautiful.

Q: Did you learn anything new?
Yes, I did. It's taken me 30 years to learn that the title of my first book, *Death at an Early Age*, was wrong. These children don't die. In *Ordinary Resurrections*, you have children who live in the South Bronx, the poorest district in the nation, with the highest rate of pediatric asthma, and they still do not die, even when we build walls of racial apartheid.

These children stand at the wall and light their lights and show us they will not be extinguished. That's why I consider this book a sequel to *Death at an Early Age*. It's the most hopeful book I've ever written.

Q: What is it about these children that helps them?
I think these kids have an extraordinary capacity to open up their hearts to strangers, to reignite their faith in life. There's something very moving about the way kids like Elio and Pineapple refuse to live up to the morbid stereotypes that sociologists use to describe them.

But these are not poster children for the poor. They're regular kids, and there are hundreds of thousands of kids like them in our cities.

Q: You've said this is the most cheerful book you've written about teachers. Why?
I like teachers, and, by and large, whether in wealthy or poor districts, I'm always stirred by the tremendous decency and kindness of teachers in public schools.

The teachers I write about in this book are not "super teachers." They are good, solid human beings who do their job day after day with love and affection.

These are regular teachers in a good American school—not a fancy school funded by business, just a regular American school. And it's a happy school, despite all the odds. The teachers I love most have grace. Their work is not proficiency and outcome, it's poetry and ministry.

RESOURCES

- *Ordinary Resurrections: Children in the Years of Hope* Published spring, 2000, $18.75
- *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*, 1995, $17.25
- *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, 1991, $11.20
- *Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America*, 1988, $8
- *Illiterate America*, 1985, $11.86
- *On Being a Teacher*, 1981, $12.71
- *Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools*, 1967, $11.16

The discount prices above were listed by Amazon.com at *NEA Today* press-time. You can order any of these titles easily at the *NEA Today* Web site. Just point your browser to www.nea.org/neatoday/0004/intervw.html.

Q: What about the push for accountability that says these schools don't stack up?
Well, I'm not a complete romantic. I know there must be standards and examinations. But exams are used in ways that are increasingly punitive. We don't pay high salaries to these teachers. These children don't have access to two years of preschool, nor do they have small class sizes or well-funded school libraries. Yet we subject these schools to the same standards as suburban schools.

These children are getting $8,000 invested in their school while another school receives $18,000. That's not democracy. It's punishing the children and the teachers of the poor, not for their sins, but for ours.

Q: Where does the standards movement fall short?
The best things that happen in public schools are the outcomes that can never be predicted. The most beautiful discoveries children make are not like mountaintops that can be charted with maps, they're like crevices you won't really see until you're standing on top of them.

The trouble with the standards movement is that you're so busy looking toward the next exam, you miss the crevices. The good news is that most good teachers find a way to deliver the skills without reducing classrooms to boot camps.

Q: So "outcomes" aren't enough?
There are two sets of vocabulary in education. One is for the national conventions organized by business. It uses words like outcome-based, performance-based. That's graceless jargon with very little connection to classrooms.

Most good teachers don't talk this way. We're not hired to make mud pies. We don't have to relinquish our humanity. The best teachers don't come into a school because they want to become floor managers of industry. They come because of the poetry. If we reduce teachers to automatons with test-driven curriculum, the profession will lose all of its joy and the most poetic teachers will not stay.

Q: Your new book is more personal than your previous work. Why?
It's a memoir. I've been living as if I'm still 29, but I'm 64. I saw this as my last chance to spend six hours a day keeping up with children at their school, church, and home. I don't know if I'll have the strength to go among them again. Little Elio would see me heading to a subway stop late at night and he'd worry. "Cuidate," be careful, he'd say, and offer to help me.

I also write about my parents who are in their 90s. I was writing about two gentle people at the end of one century and children at the beginning of a new century. How wonderful. ✔

History Gets a New World View

And a new advanced placement exam will reflect this environmental world view starting next year.

History "traditionally has been seen through the eyes of the military and political elite," says **Deborah Smith Johnston**, an NEA member who trains teachers in the emerging field of environmental world history. "But now we're bringing in social history and biological and ecological views of world history. And it's not just about acid rain."

New approaches to world history, notes Johnston, who teaches advanced placement history and geography at Lexington High School in Massachusetts, have been making headlines since national standards were released in 1994.

"World history is no longer the story of Western civilization," she says, "or an 'us and them' kind of thing."

Instead, explains Johnston, world history today is increasingly looking at big themes, patterns of how the world operates across time and space.

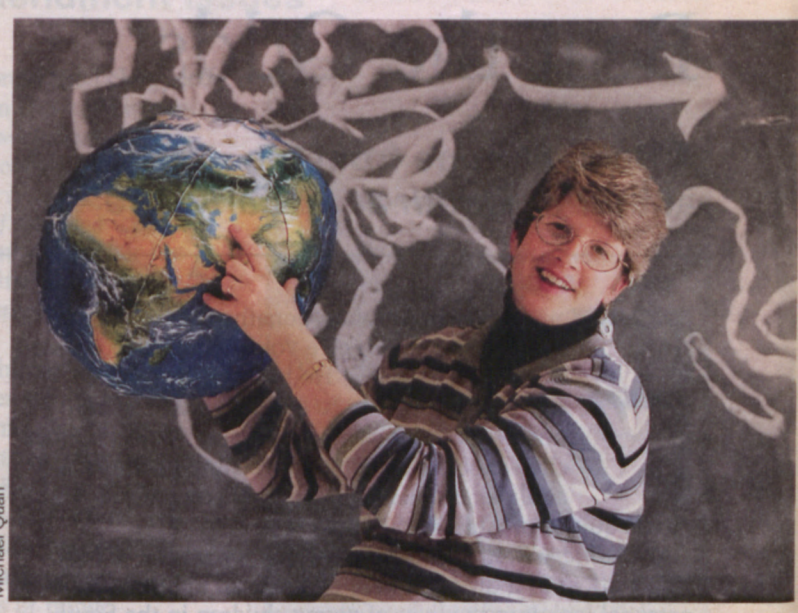
An environmental perspective on world history, Johnston notes, helps students establish connections between, for example, the domestication of animals and plants and agricultural pollution.

Taking such an approach can illuminate why people settled where they did and how they used their land, why rice farming developed in China while the Incas used terrace farming.

Every year, Johnston and fellow teacher Julie Gauthie conduct Environmental History Teaching Institutes for secondary teachers. Sponsored by the World History Association, their training shows educators how to teach world history with an environmental history emphasis.

Environmental world history, Johnston points out, is a mainstream scholarly trend in world history.

"It can be integrated into geography, history, and any social studies course," asserts Johnston, "because it's dealing with big themes—disease, migration, and population."



Michael Quan

Impact:
The College Board has recognized this new view of world history. It will offer an Advanced Placement Program® world history course for the first time in 2001, with the first exam scheduled for May 2002.

Thirty-five college and high school educators will attend the National Teacher Training Institute at the World History Center at Northeastern University this July. They'll become the first teacher-trainers who'll shape the new AP course and guide its introduction into high schools around the world.

"This institute will get teachers ready in both content and preparation," says Johnston. "It's really exciting to see the caliber of teachers and their commitment to a whole new field of teaching."

For More:
Contact Deborah Smith Johnston at dsjohnst@lynx.neu.edu. For more on the College Board's new AP program, check the Web at www.collegeboard.org/ap/worldhistory/. ✔

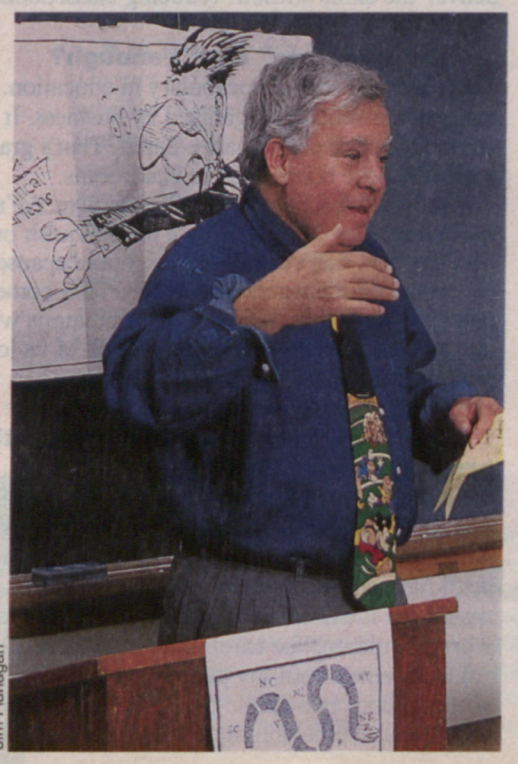
Trends

Professional development online? They're doing it in California. The California Teachers Association is working with OnlineLearning.net to provide UCLA Extension courses to CTA members—at a discount!

Courses include teaching English as a foreign language, instructional technology, and—no surprise!—online teaching. The service offers convenient access to lectures and assignments and class discussions 24 hours a day.

For more information, go to: www.cta.org/news/index.html.

Political Cartoons Draw Lessons



Jim Flanagan

Innovator:
William Ray Heitzmann

Job:
Professor of education, Villanova University

Bright Idea:
This election year is no laughing matter. But William Ray Heitzmann considers election 2000 a unique opportunity to use political cartoons to challenge students to think critically.

"Political cartoons are a wonderful springboard to classroom discussion," says Heitzmann, who's developed a model that uses cartoons to teach thinking skills to students of all ages.

Heitzmann, author of *50 Political Cartoons for Teaching U.S. History* (Social Studies School Service), says that promoting thinking through cartoon interpretation requires a hierarchy of subskills.

"You can introduce concepts like symbolism and caricature very early," says Heitzmann.

Elementary students, for instance, can look at a caricature of a popular figure, compare it with a photo to see what's been exaggerated, and discuss whether the caricature is positive or negative.

Older students can learn how cartoonists use visual shorthand. All students recognize corporate logos, but far fewer know that the donkey and elephant represent political parties.

Heitzmann also suggests giving students a cartoon without a caption and letting them write one. Such an exercise can help build student interpretive skills.

For More:
Contact Heitzmann at ray.heitzmann@villanova.edu. *To learn about building a political cartoon library, using cartoons to teach about stereotypes, and more, go to www.nea.org/neatoday.* ✔

The Toll Standardized Tests Take

In his new book Standardized Minds *(Perseus, $26), journalist and former community college professor Peter Sacks discusses how America's obsession with testing is impeding real learning.*

What's driving the ever-increasing emphasis on standardized test scores?
Politicians have focused on an issue that they think appeals to voters. It's seen as good to be "tough on schools."

Public schools are in great danger. The notion that test scores equal quality means that money will flow to schools that have the greatest increase in test scores. Money will flow out of those schools that don't do well. This accountability system establishes an underlying mechanism for market forces to take over education.

Our nation seems to be applying the same regulatory model to schools that we apply to underperforming savings and loan institutions. In the future, will regulators go in and seize non-performing schools, dissolve their assets, and sell them to the highest bidder?

What are the consequences for students?
Policy-makers have failed to anticipate the consequences of turning classrooms into test-drilling centers. If they were really concerned about student-centered learning, they'd be listening to the research community about the effects of this testing.

We get students today who are bored with school because of this unrelenting emphasis on test results and on teaching to the tests. Low-scoring students get herded into a perpetual cycle of remediation.

Since high-stakes tests tap surface-level processes, we get students who can't think critically and can't apply tools of learning to real-world problems. Processes that can enrich learning are being set aside, because eveything that goes on in a classroom has to be tied to the standardized tests.

What's the effect on teachers?
Just as HMOs have taken decisions out of physicians' hands, the professional nature of teaching is also being compromised.

Teachers are in a difficult position, but they should look at what their options might be locally. Holding workshops for parents and politicians is one. Armed with better information, voters could turn this around.

What's the alternative?
We should hold schools accountable for meaningful outcomes that have a connection to the American economy. That economy demands citizens with creative, intelligent minds. Not everyone fits into the same box.

Standardized tests should be used on an informative basis—to gauge what's going on in a district, not to make decisions about individuals. You don't need to test everybody to do this. You just need a sampling.

For More:
Visit www.nea.org/neatoday for Sacks's views on the future of standardized testing. ✔

NEA Innovators

Good information stands the test of time," says Barb Kapinus, a staffer in NEA's Teaching and Learning unit. *Ideas for Teaching and Learning to Read,* by Anne P. Sweet of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, falls in that category.

The publication, now reissued by NEA, provides 10 interrelated ideas for transforming the teaching and learning of reading and offers a two-decade research context on what works in reading instruction.

"There have been dramatic gains in our knowledge about what works and how students learn," adds Kapinus. "It's important to inform the practice of today's educators involved in literacy instruction with these newer concepts."

For a free copy of *Ideas for Teaching and Learning to Read,* visit the Web at www.nea.org/readingmatters.

What High Schools Are Doing Right

Innovator: Gwendolyn J. Cooke

Job:
Until recently, director of urban services at the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP); now superintendent for the Savannah-Chatham County school district in Georgia

Bright Idea:
Traditional American high schools are under fire. Leon Botstein, president of Bard College and author of *Jefferson's Children: Education and the Promise of American Culture* (see Innovators, January *NEA Today*), has stirred controversy with his call for high schools to end in tenth grade.

Gwendolyn Cooke takes strong issue with that stance.

"Yes, schools have to rejuvenate themselves," says Cooke, "but you don't have to cut school off at tenth grade to do that. This rush to adulthood worries me."

Research from the Minneapolis-based Search Institute, Cooke points out, shows that teens want families and schools to provide clear rules and consequences. She questions how an earlier college entrance could fulfill that need.

"Colleges are even more impersonal than large high schools," she notes. "Dormitories have few boundaries. Many colleges are graduating little more than half their students after six years. If you look at it that way, they're failing, too."

Paul Tañedo

What to do? Cooke says more than 2,000 U.S. high schools have signed on to implement the reforms outlined in "Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution," a 1996 report from NASSP and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. These reforms include:

- Making large schools smaller through an academy structure, where 500-600 students are grouped together with the same six teachers. This way no teacher is responsible for more than 90 students a term.
- Keeping schools open 12 months a year and, in some cases, 12 hours a day, increasing flexibility for both students and staff.
- Designing instruction around individual learning styles.
- Enabling qualified high school students to accumulate college credits. "More than 1 million already are getting credits, but we need to encourage this more," says Cooke.
- Offering substantive professional development.

Cooke bristles at the suggestion that high school teachers aren't well qualified in their subject areas. Most have 30 to 40 credits in their subjects, are certified in what they're teaching, and get a master's in their content area within a few years.

It's important, Cooke adds, to remember that academic achievement is only one purpose of high school.

"High school is a transitional experience between childhood and adulthood," says Cooke. "Students need to learn how to live with others and mature in many different ways. It's a journey, and they should be allowed to experience it."

For More:
Visit the NASSP Web site at www.nassp.org. ✔

'TurnItIn' Snares Online Cheaters

A California teacher test drives new software that can catch students who plagiarize from the Web.

How can teachers prevent e-plagiarism when a world of information is just "a cut and paste" away? At Bullard High School in Fresno, California, teacher Thomas Atkins has been testing a revolutionary plagiarism detection software that may provide an answer.

Designed to combat the theft of digital text, the software—TurnItIn.com—seems to be successful at revealing text that students have lifted whole from the Web and turned in to teachers as their own.

"Not all kids plagiarize, but many do," says Atkins, an anatomy and physiology teacher who has been beta-testing the software. "If teachers had magic vision into how many students use someone else's intellectual property as their own, they would find as many as 20 percent of students cheat."

Developed by Bullard alum John Barrie and a group of his UC Berkeley colleagues, TurnItIn.com uses digital technology to conduct a meta-search of the Internet to locate sources of probable plagiarism.

Teachers who paste in students' word-processed assignments receive both an "Originality Report" that cites the degree of originality and URL links that help teachers determine what Web resources their students have tapped.

Barrie, now CEO of Berkeley-based iParadigms, Inc., decided his alma mater was the perfect place to test a high school version of the software.

Tomás Ovalle

Thomas Atkins's high school students check out software that can highlight the parts of a student's report plagiarized from Web sites.

This past September, iParadigms partnered with Bullard to bring enhanced computer technology to the school.

The company created the school's first Web site, Bullard.MyK12.com, and set up individual pages for each of Bullard's 268 classes.

Once installed on a school's network, TurnItIn.com allows students to submit their word-processed assignments to a teacher's proprietary home page on that Web site. Each student is given a digital receipt and an E-mail address.

Overnight, the files are converted into a series of digital mathematical algorithms, which within milliseconds are then sent to virtually every Internet site.

When the teacher opens each student's file the next day, the program identifies the student and indicates the percentage of text taken from another

Idea Exchange

Recycled Lamination

Used laminating film makes great overhead sheets. I go to a Kinko's or any other store that laminates and tell them that I am a teacher looking for used laminating film. They can usually find some discarded pieces that I can cut into 8" by 11" sheets.

Smaller pieces of laminated paper are used for letters, numbers, and playing cards, since the lamination is thick and sturdy.

Laurie Staley
Olathe, Kansas

Planned Passes

To teach my seventh and eighth grade study hall students organizational skills and reduce the number of students leaving the room constantly, I hand out three colored slips of paper each Monday. They can be used as passes to visit their locker, use the restroom, or go to the library.

Having only three slips for a five-day week encourages students to visit the restroom and get everything they need from their lockers before coming to class.

Marty Peregoy
Elba, Nebraska

Floor Circles

When teaching parts of a circle—pi, area, and circumference—I use a tool we have readily available: the floor.

I use washable overhead markers and draw a large circle that covers about one-third of my floor. I draw a perfect circle using a marker tied to a piece of string taped to the floor.

I draw the diameter, a radius, and a chord. My students pace all the parts as we define them, counting their steps.

When we display their data on a chart, it's easy to see that the walk around the circle took about three times as many steps as the walk across the circle. I find that kids don't forget what pi means since they literally walked it.

Pam Luckenbaugh
Edison, New Jersey

Works4Me
NEA's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? You can pass along your tips to *NEA Today*'s 2.5 million readers in one of five ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org
- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday

source. The student's report is displayed, with plagiarized sections underlined and color coded.

The colors correspond to a list of URLs from where the text originated, so the teacher can go back and check inappropriate or excessive use.

The program notes the percentage of text plagiarized, underlines lifted text, and lists the URLs where the text came from.

"It works," says Atkins, a 32-year teaching veteran. "I've submitted students' papers, and the program searches files, within files, and it finds lifted text."

Barrie, the program's creator, claims that TurnItIn is sensitive enough to identify borrowed blocks of text as far down as the eight-word level. The program is said to check every computer in the world, in any language, and archival material—for example, student papers submitted the year before.

How prevalent is online cheating? The Associated Press cites an unprecedented increase in Web sites that offer free, downloadable papers to students, and a 1998 survey by *Who's Who Among High School Students* found 80 percent of students willing to admit that they cheat.

That makes countering high-tech cheating with high-tech monitors "an issue of fairness," says Atkins, "because kids who are taking the time to do the right thing sometimes get lower grades than those who cheat."

TurnItIn.com is expected to be available for general release by the fall 2000 school year. Barrie estimates the cost, at the school district level, will be around "one dollar per kid per year."

About 20 teachers are currently testing the program throughout Bullard.

What are the odds that an innocent student will get tagged?

"The human brain is so marvelous that if you give a million kids the same topic, there would be a million different approaches, and none of them would show up in TurnItIn.com," says Atkins.

"Each of us has a brain that's completely unique," he adds, "and when you run something through it, process it, what comes out is as unique as a fingerprint." ✔

—Michelle Green

For more information, E-mail Thomas Atkins at tsa01@csufresno.edu. To learn more about iParadigms, Inc., visit the Web at plagiarism.org.

[DILEMMA]

How do you handle disruptive students?

I've found that peer pressure is an effective way to control behavior. I let my students sit with their friends on Fridays, if the class has not disrupted the learning process three times during one given hour.

When students get noisy, I simply hold up one finger. If I get to three, I note the class hour on the board. The students usually control their behavior, since they want to sit with their friends.

Trina Laing
Middle school teacher
Apopka, Florida

■ I had a student whose normal speaking voice overwhelmed other students. He never raised his hand, often left his seat, and would throw things or insult others if he felt neglected.

Teachers were placing him in the back of the room to avoid giving him an audience. This only convinced him that they didn't like him. So I placed the child in the front of the room.

When I began the lesson, I would open his book for him and point to the text—a visual stimulus. As the discussion began, I would encourage him to share his views early and then remind him that others needed to share.

If his behavior became disruptive, I'd ask him to step into the hall.

I'd explain what behavior I accepted and reaffirm that I wasn't objecting to him, but to his behavior.

The student came to understand what acceptable behavior was so well that when other students abruptly entered a conversation, he would remind them that, in my class, they need to show respect—it's very rude to interrupt others.

Pamela Galus
High school earth science educator
Omaha, Nebraska

■ I allow students to be disruptive, if that is what they want to do. What I do is make sure they understand that there are consequences for their behavior.

If a student is doing something that's not appropriate, I write the student's name on the board. The only punishment is that the students must see that name for the rest of the morning. This is usually enough.

But if the same student decides to do something else, I put a check by the name. The student must write a prepared sentence 50 times per check.

If students argue the check, which is their choice, I simply continue to add checks until they decide that they've issued themselves a large enough writing assignment.

William Smith
Fifth grade teacher
Brunswick, Ohio

Ted Pitts

■ I've worked with one child for the past four years as a Title I tutor, primary assistant, reading instructor, and now as his third grade teacher. If I corrected him, didn't call on him first, or told him to focus, he'd complain. Tears, negative body language, muttering . . .

This year, I gave him a yellow card and a red card. I explained that when he starts to display negative body language, I would silently place the yellow card in front of him as a cue to reverse his behavior. When he straightened himself out, I'd remove the card, again without a word.

I wrote "Ms. Brooks' 5-10 minute cool-off card" on the red card. When he got that one, he was to leave the classroom for up to 10 minutes and pull himself together. When he returned, if I still saw traces of negative behavior, I'd return the card to him and he'd have to leave again.

This system, combined with a goal-specific hourly behavior chart, has worked well for him.

Deborah Brooks
Primary teacher
Lexington, Kentucky

■ I teach a first grade inclusion class with a wonderful special education teacher and a paraprofessional. For our especially disruptive students, we have had luck with the 15-minute timer approach, incorporating individual sticker charts.

We set our timer to go off every 15 minutes. Each time students disrupt the class during that period earns them one check mark. If they get more than three checks in 15 minutes, they don't get their sticker for that block of time.

If they earn the assigned number of stickers—we set a goal that allows for errors on their part—they get about 20 minutes of free time, and they can earn a pull from a prize bag.

Jennifer Long
First grade teacher
Houma, Louisiana

Got An Answer?

What do you do when you think parents have done a student's assignment?

Send your answer by regular mail, by fax (202/822-7206), or by E-mail to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Please include your name, city, state, job title, and grade level, if applicable.

Published respondents will receive a new *NEA Today* mug!

Will I Use This in the Real World?

Tiger Paws Publishing teaches Kentucky high school students how all those computer classes pay off.

Photos by Brian Bohannon

Kim Lyons's students work on developing a Web page for a local bank. A video commercial is also in the works. Says Lyons: "It's a great way to teach!"

When Kim Lyons was hunting for an advanced computer class that would excite students of all abilities about how computers are used in the real world, she pounced on the concept she now calls "Tiger Paws Publishing."

This school-based enterprise at Breckinridge County High School in rural Harned, Kentucky, involves students in the design, production, marketing, sales, and distribution of computer-generated merchandise inspired by the school's tiger mascot.

Each year, 20 Tiger Paws "employees" are selected from the more than 200 students who take the prerequisite Introduction to Computers class.

Lyons, a computer and video production teacher, notes that candidates are evaluated for their grades, attitude, and commitment to putting in time before and after school.

This advanced class integrates subject matter from all areas of the curriculum, says Lyons, and many special ed students participate.

Students in the program acquire high-level technical computer skills and learn all aspects of the business as well, from design and desktop publishing to billing and inventory. They're even learning advertising via an infomercial they produce in the class studio.

Three years ago, the students started out by making shirts for themselves. Then, recalls Lyons, orders slowly came in from the student body and faculty.

Now Tiger Paws Publishing is a burgeoning business that creates T-shirts, calendars, clocks, mousepads, buttons, note cards, business forms, and more for the school.

"We do lots of tiger designs," says Lyons. "Our big thing is calendars where we cut people out and put them in different backgrounds."

Tiger Paws has extended its reach way beyond merchandise promoting various school clubs and athletic events. Local merchants and community residents have all become customers.

Class projects now include flyers for the public library, church bulletins, conference materials, even laminated bookmarks for a couple's 50th anniversary celebration. Students also produce T-shirts promoting positive messages about sexual abstinence and other social issues.

All revenue from sales is "reinvested" back into the business and used to buy more equipment and supplies, every-

"Students are so proud of their work, and they're so embarrassed if mistakes go out."

—Kim Lyons
High school computer science teacher
Harned, Kentucky

How I Did It

Jeff Doles
High school art teacher
Hampshire, Illinois

"My art education professors told me art belongs outside the classroom. That's why during my first year teaching, I decided to try something new in art education."

Bringing the community into the classroom and the classroom into the community has been my major objective.

As a first-year teacher, my first step was to send out a packet to the community introducing myself and a new club I was forming—HEART, Hampshire's Elite Art Resource Team.

HEART would focus on bringing together parents, teachers, students, and members of the community for art experiences that would benefit the students and the school.

Next, I contacted the local paper and discussed my goals for the art department with the editor. This resulted in a front-page article.

John Elbers

Within a week after the article appeared, I got a call from a new local business that needed a large mural painted on one of its walls. This accomplished my goal of getting art in the community—and provided an opportunity to raise money for the art program.

Two of my best students are working on the project.

The booster club then asked us to do a mural on the gym entrance. The newspaper was there again and printed another article.

The community has also come into our classroom. Art students from local colleges have visited. A successful local artist has come—and completed a painting in front of the art students over the course of a day. The art club has visited her studio and viewed her work.

It's important that students get a perspective other than my own so they don't develop tunnel vision.

thing from a thermal heat press to additional software.

But teacher Kim Lyons stresses that students profit more by what is learned than what is earned.

"Tiger Paws has really enhanced the image of young people in the neighborhood," says Lyons. "I saw a girl at church poke her mom and say, 'Mom, I typed that!' when she saw the Tiger Paws credit line on the bottom of the bulletin."

Adds Lyons: "They're so proud of their work, and they're so embarrassed if mistakes go out."

Students are dedicated, too. When an order for 76 custom-designed shirts came in for the regional cheerleader competition, students stayed after school to complete the orders. And work doesn't stop over the summer.

"If we have projects during the summer, we pull them in," says Lyons.

Students can work on those projects at a special summer program.

"Our Breckinridge computer staff," Lyons explains, "runs a half-day, one-week computer camp that teaches fourth through eighth grade students several different applications—multimedia, morphing, anything that gets them interested."

The school administration, Lyons notes, has been very supportive, providing funds to purchase a color copier, scanner, digital camera, and software for publishing and T-shirt making.

It also helps that her class doesn't work in techno-isolation.

Breckinridge is a technologically progressive school, offering its 960 students an option of 11 computer-related courses. Each teacher has a computer and printer in the classroom, with E-mail and Internet access, and the school boasts a state-of-the-art video-broadcasting studio.

Lyons has been approached by other schools seeking her advice on how to create similar enterprises within their own schools.

"I invite them to come spend the day with us," she says. "Whether you call it a desktop publishing class or a business class, it's a great way to teach!" ✔

—Michelle Y. Green

For more, E-mail Kim Lyons at lyonsk@b-ridge.k12.ky.us or visit www.b-ridge.k12.ky.us.

[DILEMMA]

How do you juggle with other classes or staff who use your room?

I've found that the only way to survive is to appropriate an AV cart and turn it into a rolling set of shelves. When I'm in my room, the cart serves as shelves behind my desk. When other teachers are using the classroom, I wheel it out and attempt to accomplish my work.

I also have extra office supplies stashed in our computer lab, since it's one of the most frustrating feelings not to have a stapler, an empty file folder, tape, or a #2 pencil.

Most of the telephone calls to the room are for me, even when the other teacher is assigned to be in there. I purchased a telephone extension wire and run the phone into our computer lab when I'm spending my planning period there.

Don Schulte
High school social studies teacher
St. Louis County, Missouri

■ I teach special education and share my classroom with a music teacher who teaches two periods in the morning. Open communication is the key.

We discuss what the students should know with respect to boundaries in the room. We set up our desks in opposite corners so we each have our personal space. And we do our best not to let students invade that space.

I requested a room divider, which has been a wonderful way to block off areas when I'm not there. I also use this to block off my desk if I must be in the room while the other teacher is teaching. This allows me to move around my desk without disturbing her class.

We openly discuss problems that arise throughout the year—finding gum on desks, for example—and decide jointly how to handle the issues consistently.

Lisa McCain
Junior high special education teacher
Leavittsburg, Ohio

■ When I discovered that I was going to have to share my art studio space with a psychology class, I was chagrined, to say the least. It seemed a terrible inconvenience not to be able to use my room to mat and grade work

What's worked for me is a change of mindset.

I let go of the need to have a rigid seating chart, so it doesn't bother me if the order of the classroom furniture is disturbed. In addition, the psych students are wonderfully appreciative of the art students' displayed work, and tell them so. I've found their human behavior course work stimulating as well.

Mutual respect and continual communication between staff have been the real keys to harmonious sharing of space at our overcrowded school.

Gail Martin Rutherford
High school art teacher
Portland, Oregon

■ When I have to share my classroom with other staff members, I always make sure that they have a key to the room and a secure place to store their personal supplies. I show them where I keep generic supplies and ask them to let me know when something is running low. I also share a blank copy of my seating chart and ask that they leave me a copy of their seating chart, in case there's a concern at a later time.

My classroom is a science lab. I take the time to show other teachers where the master cutoff valves are for the natural gas and water lines.

Since roving teachers have been issued laptops, I've set up the computer in my "office" area with a password, so that no one else will be able to access it.

Roberta Harnish
High school science teacher
St. John, Indiana

■ I share my math classroom with a first-year social studies teacher. Considering the strain that she's under, I try to do what I can for her. I don't really have time to do much preparation for her other than clearing off the overhead stand. I do offer her bulletin board space and respect her "Save" on the blackboard.

I have learned a lot from her. I have marveled at some of the discussions she has generated with her students. And I'm in awe of the way she manages to survive her first year, pushing a cart from room to room, not having a classroom to call her own.

Connye LaCombe
High school mathematics teacher
St. Paul, Minnesota

Got An Answer?

How do you improve student attendance?

Send your answer by regular mail, by fax to 202/822-7206, or by E-mail to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Please include your name, city, state, job title, and grade level, if applicable.

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Ted Pitts

Turn parents into partners.

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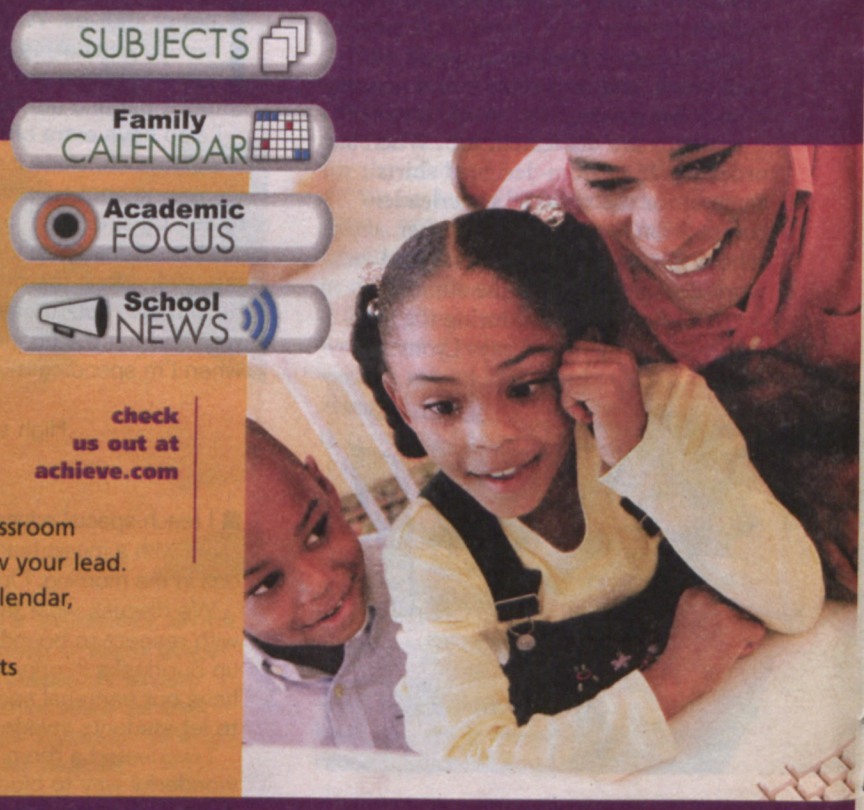

Teachers say lack of parent participation is one of their main problems. Pressed for time and resources, teachers need an easy way to encourage more meaningful cooperation. The solution?

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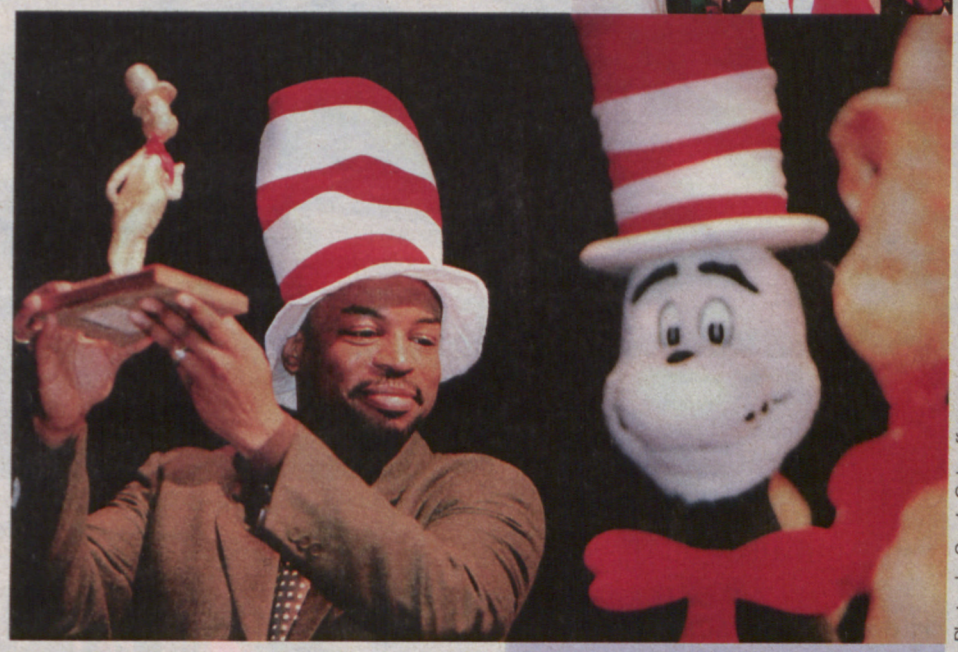
NEA Names First ACATemy Award Winners

As 20 million children and adults celebrated NEA's third annual Read Across America, the first four ACATemy Awards were presented at NEA headquarters.



Photos by Sandy Schaeffer

Movie stars have their Oscars and musicians their Grammys. Now, NEA and readers across America have awarded the first-ever ACATemy Awards to four individuals who exemplify the very best spirit of the beloved Dr. Seuss (Theodor Geisel) on the day commemorating his 96th birthday.

The Golden Cats were awarded March 2 during Read Across America festivities at NEA Headquarters before a Cat in the Hat-bedecked audience of school children, educators, political leaders, local celebrities, and media. Honored were *Reading Rainbow* host and executive producer LeVar Burton, 92-years-young reading mentor Minnon Friedman, and NEA members Edward Sheerin and Mary Ann Gensicke.

"Books have the ability to transform lives," said award winner **LeVar Burton**, whose commitment to reading can be seen in his 17 years with the acclaimed PBS program, *Reading Rainbow*. Noting that his mother, an avid reader and teacher, set an example for him, he stressed, "Children need to learn that reading is a natural part of life. We eat, we sleep, we read."

Honoree **Minnon Friedman**, who at the age of 89 became a reading mentor for the school-based literacy organization Everybody Wins! DC, said, "I don't know how I can get a reward for something I love doing." The retired teacher accepted her statuette from nine-year-old Sarah Braun, her reading partner for the past four years.

Edward Sheerin volunteers to teach reading to disadvantaged school children after hours of teaching kindergarten in Santa Rosa, California.

"Some kids are really up against it," he said. "They don't know what it's like to sit in their mom's lap and be read to, to know others care and that they have a future." Sheerin, who uses poetry, drama, folklore, and fairy tales to reach "hard to reach" kids, received the 1997 Certificate of Congressional Recognition from the U.S. Congress for his commitment to reading and education.

Tying on her special reading apron, honoree **Mary Ann Gensicke**, the singing librarian, sang her acceptance.

It's fun and frolic Seuss-style at the ACATemy Awards as LeVar Burton (above, left) and Minnon Friedman (below, right) accept the Golden Cat from NEA VP Reg Weaver (below, center).

Gensicke—a former teacher of 23 years who now is a library media specialist at Monroe Early Childhood School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa—engages students in books through creative costumes and performances.

"I represent so many wonderful, dedicated teachers and librarians who have given their life to reading and children," she said.

ACATemy award winners were nominated from applications to more than 30 NEA national partner organizations, and final selections were made by a panel of Read Across America volunteers. The Golden Cat statuettes were crafted by area high school students. ✔

READING RESOURCES

- The International Reading Association will host "Learning to Teach Reading: Setting the Research Agenda" April 29 in Indianapolis, Indiana. The conference, scheduled immediately prior to IRA's 45th Annual Convention, includes concurrent sessions on teacher education, connections from research to application, the impact of professional standards, and more. The registration fee of $150 for IRA members and $175 for non-members includes transcripts from each session. Register online at www.reading.org.
- The National Institute for Literacy relates low literacy to unemployment, poverty, and crime. The Institute reports four in 10 Americans with low reading skills live in poverty and that 70 percent of the prison population falls into the two lowest levels of reading proficiency. NIL research also notes that 75 percent of today's jobs require at least a ninth-grade reading level and that workers lacking a high school diploma earn a mean monthly income of $452, compared to $1,829 for those who have a bachelor's degree. Visit www.nifl.gov/nifl/
- The National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement provides online information about reading and writing instruction. Newly released is Effective Integrated Language Arts Instruction (Pre-K-4), identifying effective classroom practices for literacy learning, including how to prevent reading difficulties in most at-risk students.

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Years There	Annual Salary $
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CCNT0400

Science Texts Flunk

A leading science education group says not one of the popular middle school textbooks is up to par. What's a teacher to do?

The American Association for the Advancement of Science created Project 2061 to improve science education. The project recently assembled teams of middle school teachers, curriculum specialists, and professors of science education to review nine widely used textbook series. Not one got a passing grade.

What criteria did the reviewers use in rating the books?

Project 2061 and the National Research Council have developed standards for what children should know and be able to do in science as they progress through school. These standards focus on important scientific understandings about nature—for example, that matter is made up of atoms.

The reviewers wanted to see whether the textbooks could help teachers teach these ideas. They found that the texts do cover the big topics, but they don't help teachers teach, or students learn.

What was wrong with the textbooks examined?

The texts cover too many topics and don't develop any of them well.

"Dictionaries–that's a good way to characterize these books," says Jo Ellen Roseman, who led the textbook study. "Most have no more material about a concept than you would find in a dictionary, and often it's not even that good."

"Our students are lugging home heavy texts full of disconnected facts that neither educate them nor motivate them," adds Project 2061 Director George Nelson. "It's a credit to science teachers that their students are learning anything at all."

How did the textbooks get so useless?

"I don't usually defend the textbook companies, but they do have constraints," says AAAS study leader Roseman. "They're trying to sell to every school district in the United States, and each state has its own standards. As long as the states say they must have all the concepts, we're pushing for a dictionary approach."

If all the books are bad, what's the alternative?

Don't buy new textbooks, says Roseman. Some communities labor under a policy that says every student must have a science text no more than seven years old.

"That's a waste," she says.

Instead, Roseman recommends that school districts put their money into limited, stand-alone units covering major science concepts, as well as into professional development.

The Project 2061 review teams gave high marks to three units developed by Michigan State University and the Michigan Department of Education.

This excerpt, from the Michigan "Matter and Molecules" unit, demonstrates how to get students thinking about the idea that molecules are in constant motion:

"Explain how you can smell an open bottle of vinegar even though you are across the room. What is actually reaching your nose? How did the vinegar molecules get into the air? How did the vinegar molecules reach your nose?"

That's a far cry from the rote memorization required from current textbooks.

At the Morse School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, NEA member Karen Spaulding teaches grades 6, 7, and 8. Her district uses *Prentice Hall Science*, one of the texts panned by AAAS (see chart below).

"On the list of materials that we use to teach science," says Spaulding, "the text is last."

Spaulding has had "countless hours" of professional development and now uses teaching kits for parts of the curriculum. The Education Development Center in nearby Newton (www.edc.org) is one source Spaulding uses.

This Cambridge teacher also recommends TERC, a 35-year-old nonprofit research organization (www.terc.edu), and the Exploratorium in San Francisco (www.exploratorium.edu) for help with professional development and with materials.

If I skip parts of the text, will my kids flunk the state tests?

No, says Spaulding. She does skip large parts of the text, and her students still take the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System.

"A deeper understanding can only help students perform better," she says. Last year, her students' scores were the most improved in the state, and above both state and school district averages.

What can I do to get better textbooks?

Complain. Write to textbook companies and, especially, to the committees and boards that buy or approve textbooks.

"If teachers don't act politically, things won't change," says Roseman.

Teachers in states where state authorities pick a list of books that can be bought with state funds—California and Texas are the biggest—can play a crucial role, because these states drive the textbook market.

"This study confirms our worst fears about the materials used to educate our children in the critical middle grades," says Project 2061 Director Nelson. "Because textbooks are the backbone of classroom instruction, we must demand improvement." ✔

Do You Use These Texts?

No middle school science textbook met the AAAS standards for a quality text. These are the books rated:

- Glencoe Life, Earth, and Physical Science
- Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Science
- Middle School Science and Technology
- Prentice Hall Science
- PRIME Science
- Science 2000
- Science Insights
- Science Interactions
- SciencePlus

Karin Huggens

For more:

- Check www.aaas.org for details of the AAAS review and a book-by-book analysis.
- The three Michigan units that received high marks are distributed by the Battle Creek Math and Science Center. For more, contact Johna Bard at 616/965-9602 or E-mail jbard@remc12.k12.mi.us.
- AAAS study leader Jo Ellen Roseman notes that the Spokane schools in Washington State have put together a useful set of independent science units and other resources. Their program is summarized on the Web at www.sd81.k12.wa.us/science/second/index.idc.

–Alain Jehlen

TEAMWORK

ESP Learn to Plan Their Own Professional Development

Innovative programs and cooperative agreements help make sure that, when it comes to professional development, support staff aren't left on the sidelines.

"Professional development is one of the top three issues for ESP around the country," along with job security and safety, according to National Council for Educational Support Personnel President Karen Mahurin.

Mahurin, a school secretary in Kenai, Alaska, says that ESP jobs continue to change, and school districts expect ESP to change with them, but most districts are doing little to help. So ESP and their Associations are taking the lead.

The most successful professional development programs are based on cooperative relationships between NEA local affiliates and school districts and between ESP and teachers.

For instance, in Bothell, Washington, administrative receptionist Jeanette Marquandt, an ESP member on the NEA Board of Directors, explains that her district has always had staff development for ESP.

A few years ago, the North Shore Education Office Personnel Association, which represents office workers and paraeducators, negotiated a pact that gives an additional 42.75 paid hours each year (prorated for part-timers) for professional growth activities.

Hours can be used to attend courses and workshops or to participate in district committees and staff retreats. The hours are paid each month and are deducted from an employee's pay at the end of the year if they are not used.

In the Council Rock School District, Pennsylvania support staff in Bucks County this year organized their 6th Annual In-service Day, held on Election Day, a non-work day for school-year employees.

"It's a wonderful day," says Council Rock ESPA President Dolores McCracken.

The district funds the day's activities, and the entire program is planned by an ESP in-service committee. This year 75 percent of support staff attended, participating in workshops on such topics as computer use, stress management, building safety codes, and crisis preparedness.

This in-service day, sparked originally by an ESP initiative, was at first offered at the discretion of the school district, and ESP were not compensated for attending. But the day is now written into the ESP contract.

In the Washington Elementary School district in Phoenix, Arizona, the need for a better ESP staff development system kept coming up through the district's collaborative decision-making process. Among the challenges facing ESP: The District's 25,000 K-8 students speak 34 different primary languages, and half of all students receive free or reduced price lunch.

Teachers and ESP work closely together in the schools and within the Washington District Education Association. So when veteran teacher and Association activist Cheryl Carson was given a one-year position, developing a district-wide program of ESP staff development, ESP involvement was an essential part of her approach.

Carson's study team will spend this year developing a plan for implementation in the fall of 2000. Her best sources? NEA members. ✔

Jeff Schultz

Professional development for ESP is often ignored, says Karen Mahurin, an Alaska school secretary.

Going the Extra Mile

"If you want something done," the saying goes, "ask a busy person."

In Paradise Valley, Arizona, one such person is Terrie Minnick, a media technician at Eagle Ridge Elementary who concurrently serves as secretary of the classified local and president of the state PTA.

"We're a union family," says Minnick, whose husband, Paul, is a member of the National Association of Letter Carriers. "When I first started working here, I just got involved."

As secretary of the Paradise Valley Support Education Association, Minnick is focused on gaining more dollars for education, salary increases, and professional growth opportunities for classified employees.

"Arizona ranks last in per pupil spending for education," she says. "We're short on teachers, and we can't even get substitutes we need in the classroom."

Minnick's two children were the impetus for active involvement in the Parent Teacher Association, an interest she followed from their elementary to high school years.

Now state president, Minnick leads the charge on health and safety issues, particularly legislation requiring children to be restrained when riding in the back of pick-up trucks.

Deanna Schulz, a paraeducator and playground supervisor, runs a school-wide mediation program in Coupeville, Washington, that uses peer mediators to settle playground conflicts. Schulz adapted a technique she learned during a conflict resolution training in 1994, and, with the backing of a counselor at Coupeville Elementary, has successfully imple-

TEAM PLAYER

A Beautiful Relationship

Name: JoAnn Falk

Job title: Now in a new position, I am a media clerk at Vineland Middle School, Pueblo, Colorado.

Experience: A classified employee for 22 years, I've always been very active in district affairs. I helped organize and lead the Association of Classified Employees in 1994, and I now serve as a member of the South Mesa Accountability Committee and co-founder and head of School District 70's Foundation Board. I also sit on the political action committee for the Colorado Education Association.

How I team up with my colleagues: I wanted to find a way to start and fund a beautification project that would involve all 15 schools in our district.

The first step was to survey each school to find out its specific needs. Based on the feedback from each school's accountability committee, the scope of the project grew to include both the planting of trees and flowerbeds and also the enhancement of school sports fields and running tracks.

Step two involved meeting with the Master Gardener's program, which is part of the state's agricultural extension service. After putting together an estimated budget and proposed project schedule, we held a meeting with County Commissioner John Klomp. He opted to expand the project to include many area parks and playgrounds.

We received county funds to implement the project, and we were even able to set up a cooperative arrangement between our own district maintenance workers and groundskeepers from the county to do the work.

The commissioner also put us in touch with the state's attorney, who is helping us work with other entities in the area of funding.

Bryan Kelsen

Media clerk JoAnn Falk knew her school beautification project would have to be a team effort.

How I see the power of teamwork today: Teamwork is definitely the way to go. It's taken a lot hard work from a lot of different people and groups, but, in the end, we're getting the job done. Some students have even gotten involved in planting flowers at various sites. ✔

RESOURCES

Help for Kids

Although auditory processing problems may affect as many as 1 in 20 children, Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD) is rarely considered as a possible cause for a child's problems in school, according to a recent article by Anne S. Robertson in *Parent News*. CAPD is not deafness, but resembles what is frequently called "auditory dyslexia" because the processing of neurological signals from the ear to the brain may not be fully developed.

Children struggling with auditory problems are frequently labeled "poor listeners" or are sometimes misdiagnosed with other learning or behavior problems such as attention deficit disorder (ADD).

Parent News is an online newsletter published by the National Parent Information Network (NPIN). The CAPD article can be found at http://npin.org/pnews/1999/pnew999/feat999.html. Contact NPIN at: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820-7469, 217/333-1386; E-mail: ericeece@uiuc.edu.

Children's Books

"Eukee is a smart little elephant who likes to chase butterflies, blow bubbles, and do cartwheels. He always feels jumpy inside, however, and can never finish the march at school." Eukee the elephant has attention deficit disorder (ADD) in the children's book *The Jumpy Jumpy Elephant*, listed on the "Children's Books about Disabilities" page of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Children (ERIC EC) Web site, at http://ericec.org/. If you work with students who don't fit into the mainstream, be sure to visit this site where you'll find an extensive collection of resources on disabilities and gifted and talented issues.

Food Service Information

The "Foodservice.com" Web site (www.foodservice.com) is a source of up-to-date information on what's going on in the food service industry. A free, weekly E-mail newsletter delivers news highlights directly to your in-box and links to more extensive Web resources. The Food Safety section of the site provides basic information on kitchen hazards, a food safety discussion forum, and links to product recall, sanitation, and training information. This site also offers an E-mail discussion list, online bulletin boards and chat, classified ads, price information, industry news, and more.

mented the program, now in its fifth year. The student mediators take 10 to 12 hours of training, before or after school. After the training, red-coated young mediators—armed with clipboards and active listening skills—help their classmates find solutions to common playground clashes.

"The kids patrol the playground looking for signs of kids being upset, angry, or sad," says Schulz. "They use language that gives complainants the power to choose, such as, 'I see you guys are having a problem. Would you like us to help you with that?'"

After 32 years on the road as a bus driver and member of the Guilderland, New York ESP Association, Linda Fischer is turning in her keys, but not before picking up a very special honor: "Best Bus Driver of the Year."

"I was absolutely flabbergasted when I heard the news," says Fischer, reflecting on her honor from the National Association for Pupil Transportation.

Fischer was chosen from thousands of candidates for her "spotless record and recommendations from students and colleagues."

Widely praised for her precision-timed schedule, Fischer begins her safety checks at 5:45 a.m. The day ends with her checking for lost possessions and drowsy children, who, she says, occasionally fall asleep and slide under seats.

Fischer's devotion to safety comes naturally. She's driven her own children and grandchildren to school.

"It'll be a bittersweet time for me," says Fischer of her upcoming June retirement. "But it's time to turn the keys over to the younger kids—some of them are kids I drove, too."

TIPS FOR THE WIRED CLASSROOM

Time for Heroic Measures

As an offshoot of a social studies unit on Ancient Greece, our teaching team works on an interdisciplinary unit on heroes. Through social studies and reading classes, students learn about ancient heroes, both historical and mythological.

From there, students develop a fictional superhero in language arts class, and they write a reflective piece on their personal heroes.

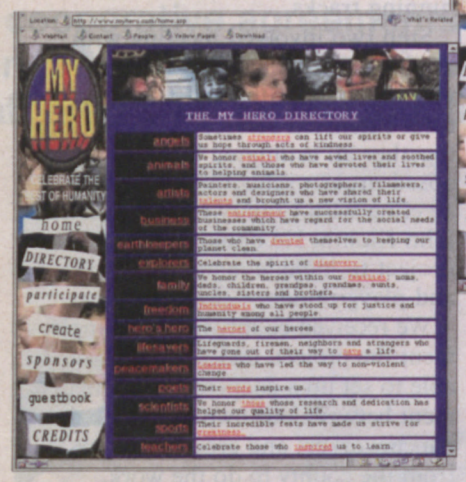
The unit culminates with students developing a Web page devoted to their personal hero, through the Web site www.myhero.com. The user-friendly format of this site allows students to easily create a Web presence.

Some students do make more elaborate pages than others, with links and scanned images, but all the sixth graders are able to create a Web page.

Imagine the look on the face of a grandfather when he sees a hero Web page devoted to him—designed by his grandchild!

Check out some examples of our students' work by going to www.myhero.com and clicking on "CREATE." Then try user name "mia" and password "hamm," or user name "wolves99" and password "ilw99."

Carol Mickley, Candi Shoemaker, and Bob Voron
Sixth grade teachers
Center Valley, Pennsylvania
Mick43@enter.net



At My Hero (www.myhero.com), students can read about heroes from all walks of life—and even create their own Web page honoring a personal hero.

My favorite Web site

Quia! (www.quia.com) has easy-to-use templates to create pop-up quizzes, matching and concentration games, word searches, and flashcards. The site also guides teachers in designing a free, simple classroom Web page.

Mike Buleza
Fourth grade teacher
Fawn Grove, Pennsylvania

Art History Goes Hi-Tech

I spent last summer learning how to create a Web site using Adobe Photoshop 5.0 and Adobe PageMill 3.0. After attending several workshops, I created a Web-based course called Art History Goes Hi-Tech at www.locl.net/homes/eystr/arthistory.

Art History Goes Hi-Tech is a survey course combining art appreciation and art history. The course integrates world history, the development of civilization, cultural understanding, and computer technology and graphics in an exciting, hands-on format.

I incorporated the sound of thunder into the site to give me an auditory signal when students are on my site—and not, for instance, checking their astrology charts. The kids boom on and off while they are on the Internet. They love this signal, and it helps me supervise without watching.

I'd like to invite art educators to use the site as a complement to their classes or as inspiration to create their own Web-based courses.

Ann Eyster
High school art teacher
Fremont, Indiana
aeyster@hotmail.com

Connect With Parents

At the start of each year or semester, send a letter home to parents to let them know about the technology in your classroom. Give parents the option of providing you with their E-mail address. Create a user list in your E-mail program's address book and send out a single E-mail to all your students' parents to let them know about upcoming projects, papers, tests, and major grades.

If you have a Web page and regularly update it, let parents know where they can find syllabi, handouts, study guides, texts, and other course materials.

You'll find that these techniques increase parents' interest and decrease students' excuses.

Josh Anderson
High school language arts teacher
Mission, Kansas
Josh_Anderson@mail.usd458.k12.ks.us

Reviewing Through Games

We have used Asymetrix ToolBook authoring software to create many projects in our social studies department. Now we're showing other teachers how to help students review material using a gaming approach. Our Web site, www.nwga.com/gordon97, offers free software programs made with ToolBook. For example, "Rivet Your Attention" is a vocabulary matching game that educators can customize.

All applications are teacher-created and student-tested. Once a lesson is over, these applications allow students to "play" with new information in a challenging format. We call it blended learning.

Bill Burton
World history teacher
Calhoun, Georgia
gordon97@nwga.com

TALK TO US:

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today*, or by Fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

Tech Tools

- **CongressLink (www.congresslink.org/contents.html) will connect your classroom to Congress. You'll find lesson plans, teacher resources, experts to contact with questions, and more.**
- **Need lesson plans? A visit to Lesson Plan Link (http://rrnet.com/~gleason/lesson.html) will give you access to more than 95 lesson plan sites.**
- **New math problems are posted weekly at Problem of the Week (potw.net). Students are provided with a worksheet and strategies to use to solve the problem. They can submit their work via E-mail, and answers are posted on the Web site the following week.**
- **Join Parlo (www.parlo.com). Registration is free at this language Web site. You'll get access to lessons, newsletters, discussion boards, and a lot more in your choice of Spanish, French, or English.**

From Maine to California

Call them key pals, not pen pals. Elementary teachers on opposite coasts join forces and link their classes via E-mail.

Who:
John Thurlow, fourth grade teacher, Dora L. Small Elementary School, South Portland, Maine, and Lin Kondrick, fifth grade teacher, Toler Elementary School, San Diego, California

E-mail:
john@thurlow.com and jdavis4@mail.sandi.net

Inspiration:
The students of John Thurlow and Lin Kondrick provided the chemistry that ultimately made a bi-coastal E-mail relationship take fire, but the spark came by way of the Road Runner Key Pals project, co-sponsored by Time Warner Cable.

The cable company made the introduction between the two classrooms—which, Kondrick says, eased her fears about safety on the Net—and also provided a free, high-speed Road Runner cable-modem connection.

"Time Warner made it easy for us, in that the company did the connections on the Internet with Road Runner," Kondrick says. "Without that, it would have been like a dinosaur getting our E-mail to work. It was instantaneous gratification, and the kids enjoyed it!"

Once connected, the two teachers developed specific learning around the technology. They took advantage of their schools' locations to develop units comparing and contrasting coastal southern California with coastal Maine.

"Both our cities are very dependent on the sea as part of our economy and our tourism," Thurlow explains. "We were able to address all those concepts through our units."

Thurlow and Kondrick developed units that integrate content areas such as geography and economics with technology, language arts, and communication skills.

Lesson:
Students did more than just send personal E-mail to a partner on the opposite coast. With the help of a team of students, Thurlow produced a Web site (hosted by Road Runner) dedicated to the project. The site includes links to Maine-based sites so that students in San Diego—or anywhere else—can log on and explore.

The two classes exchanged video "tours" of their classrooms. By digitizing the images, Thurlow uploaded a portion of his video onto the project's Web site.

Both classes collaborated on a storybook writing activity. Story sections were transmitted back and forth by E-mail, with each class adding another piece. When the narrative was completed, each teacher printed a copy and split it into picture-book format so students could illustrate it.

The E-mail exchange, says Kondrick, at one point started petering out. That's when she and Thurlow started the story project.

"The students got interested again," notes Kondrick. "You do need to spice it up."

For Kondrick, who was not a "techie," the plunge into Key Pals was worth getting wet. The project has helped her get past her high-tech anxiety.

"And," she points out, "we went much further than John and I believed we ever could have."

Thurlow, who is no newcomer to long-distance learning projects, agrees.

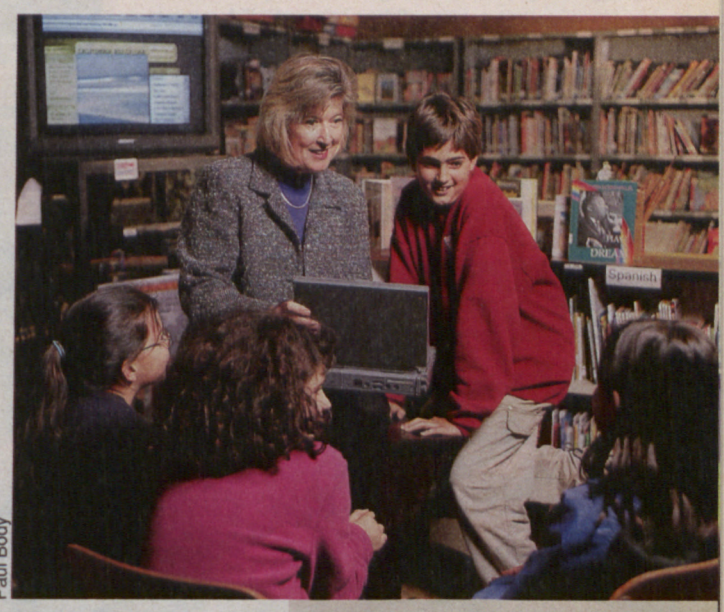
"This project added a whole new dimension to the traditional pen pal!" he says.

Click:
"You need not be worried about using this type of technology," Kondrick reassures. "If you never try it, you'll never see the kids get excited."

"The challenge for the teacher," she continues, "is to be literate enough and daring enough to do it. But teachers also need to make sure they get the technological and administrative support they need to make it successful." ✔

For more on the South Portland/San Diego Road Runner Key Pals project, go to http://home.maine.rr.com/johnthurlow/keypals/keypals98.html.

Caleb Raynor



Paul Body

From sea to shining sea: South Portland, Maine, teacher John Thurlow (top) uses a high-speed modem and E-mail to link his students with kids in San Diego teacher Lin Kondrick's classroom.

My favorite Software

PhonicsTutor CD-ROM ($139.95, 888-420-READ or go to www.phonicstutor.com) is truly multisensory, with no wasted drill time. It's so intense on phonics that I use it as a differential diagnosis of a reading disability.

Jack O'Brien
Elementary teacher
Isanti, Minnesota

Bytes for Beginners

I'm buying new computer monitors for my school. A colleague is big on ergonomics—and is urging me to choose monitors with "the best resolution." What's best?

Arriving at a resolution to this issue requires a focus on pitch—dot pitch, that is. Although a monitor's resolution—the number of picture elements (pixels) used to produce an image—is important, it's how close together pixels are placed—dot pitch—that matters to the eye.

Resolution is specified by the number of pixels in each horizontal row (say, 800) and vertical column (for example, 600) on the screen. The higher the resolution, the smaller the image. The size of your monitor (maybe 14-, 15-, or 21-inch) is also part of the ergonomic equation, in that certain resolutions (640 x 480, 800 x 600, or 1024 x 768) are best for each monitor size.

You wouldn't want to work at a 15-inch monitor set to a resolution of 1,024 x 768, since you'd be staring at a small area set to display images in finer (smaller) detail. Yet this resolution works great for a 21-inch monitor.

So what about dot pitch? The size of the dot pitch determines how "fuzzy to the eye" your new monitor will be.

Monitors with large dot pitches, up to .40 mm, are typically cheaper, yet more apt to cause eyestrain. The most common dot pitches are 0.31, 0.28, and 0.26 mm. For optimum ergonomics, stick with a dot pitch of no more than 0.27 mm.

Have comments or questions about technology? Go to www.nea.org/cet, or E-mail your questions to webeditor@dear.nea.org.

Buttons, Buttons, They Have the Buttons

Buttons and good wishes from around the world poured into this Nebraska classroom.

In 1996, **Teresa Morrison's** second grade class at McAndrew Elementary in Nebraska set out to collect a million buttons. Morrison and her students soon found themselves on a heartwarming adventure.

"Many people love buttons," says Morrison. "When they give them away, the fondness comes through. A pop tab just can't do that for you."

Her students wrote letters to newspapers across the country. In quick order, buttons of all sizes and shapes started arriving in the mail. There were buttons made of bone, glass, and even antlers, much to her students' delight.

The millionth button, which was in the shape of a white unicorn, arrived in December.

Fourth grader Leslie Graves, pictured at right with teacher Teresa Morrison, brought the unicorn button in from her aunt, who donated more than 4,000 buttons to the project.

On January 20, all of the students who participated in the project gathered at McAndrew Elementary to celebrate their success and to express their gratitude to all the button donors.

The project, Morrison believes, will have a long-lasting impact on student learning. Through their effort, students improved everything from their writing skills to their knowledge about geography and history.

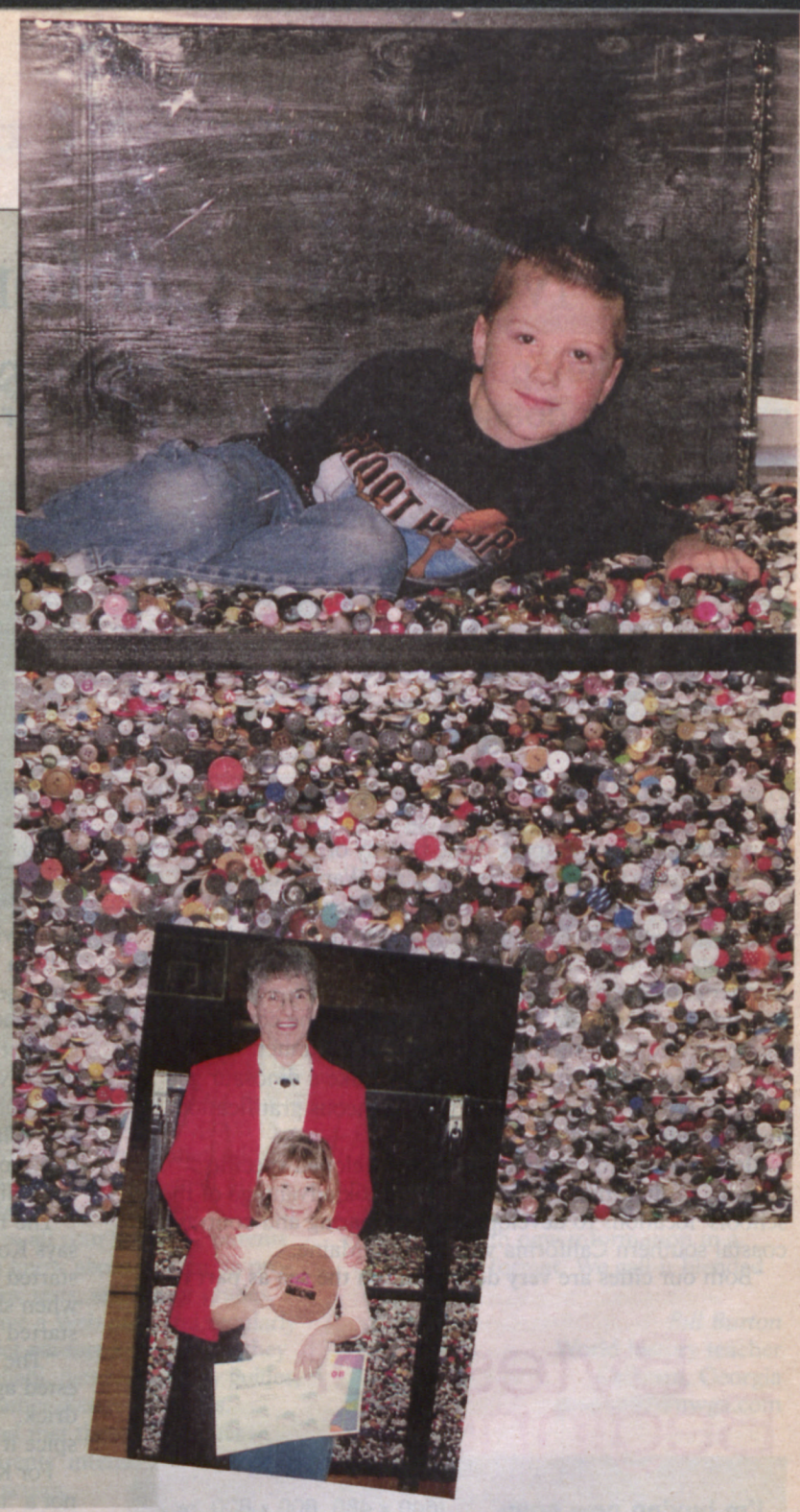
Morrison has concentrated on a different skill every year since the project started.

"This year," says Morrison, "students learned about the color wheel and how to describe all the button colors."

Morrison's classes also filled five scrapbooks with letters from the button contributors.

"Because we live in Alaska," wrote one contributor, "I thought you needed a moose button. We have moose walk through our yard."

"We learned many lessons from the project," sums up Morrison. "One of them is that people want to help kids reach their goals. I now fully understand the quote, 'Live for the journey, not the destination.'" ✔



Jeff Lowe

Disney

When Wild Dreams Come True

"If you could go anywhere in the United States, where would it be?" **Teri Lindner** asked her special needs students at State College Area High School in Pennsylvania nine years ago. The students' answer: Walt Disney World in Florida.

A trip to Disney World then seemed like an impossible, wild dream. But those students worked hard to realize that dream. They raised enough money to take the trip and, in the process, became known as the Wild Dream Team.

Today, Lindner, along with paraeducators Sharon Pearson and Pam Jimeson, continues to help the Wild Dream Team reach high goals in life.

Among the team's successes: LifeLink, an apartment-based program that helps special education students make the transition to independence. LifeLink has been featured on national television and presented at conferences around Pennsylvania.

"I think what sets this apart from other special education classes is that the students set a lot of the curriculum themselves," says Lindner. "They're acquiring skills that lead to greater independence."

Lindner will return to Walt Disney World once again this summer—as Disney's 1999 Outstanding Teacher of the Year. That honor came, in November, with a $25,000 award that Lindner has shared with her colleagues Pearson and Jimeson. Her school district received $10,000. She and her principal will use this year's Disney trip to explore creative practices in teaching and learning at the Disney Institute of Learning and Professional Development.

"In our classroom, we know that we can reach for the moon and the stars," says Lindner, pictured, inset, with Disney CEO Michael Eisner. "Our history has shown us that, once in a while, wild dreams do come true." ✔

Crowning Achievements

Rhonda Henderson Simmons wears more hats than just the Mrs. Nevada International crown she won in October 1999. This counselor at Bruner and Neal Elementary Schools in Las Vegas is helping 16 African-American students build self-esteem and learn how to dance all at the same time.

Three years ago, Henderson Simmons founded Sistahs In the Spirit, a dance group that entertains in the local community. On Saturdays, she currently helps seven- to 14-year-old "at-risk" girls learn how to perform a variety of Caribbean and African dances.

The dance classes are free and there are no auditions.

"Dancing comes naturally to many students," she says. "If you find what their natural talent is, that talent can open many doors."

Henderson Simmons is also motivating minority students from 10 Las Vegas middle schools to stay in school through a volunteer speaking program.

"I tell them," she says, "there's no excuse for saying 'I don't know' or 'I don't care.' You need to expound on the beauty in you."

In 1996, Henderson Simmons traveled to Ethiopia to train new teachers as part of the Teach for Africa program. She credits her longstanding interest in community service and education to the influence of her parents.

"My father was big on education," Henderson Simmons explains. "I was raised in an era where community service is not just for you, it's for your culture." ✔

Jim Decker

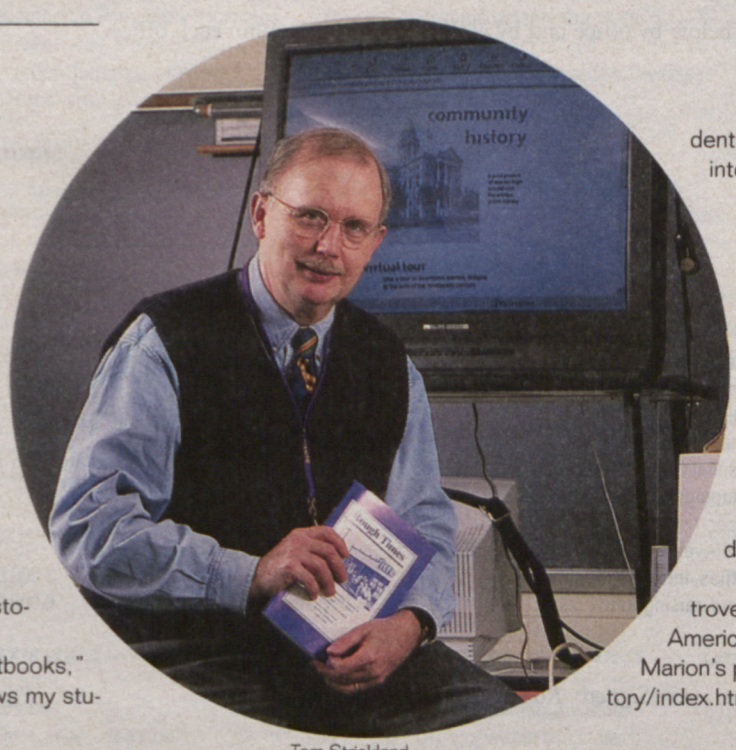
A Piece of History

William Munn, an American studies teacher at Marion (Indiana) High School, and his students have found a lot of American history right in their community, thanks to a $40,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation in 1997.

Using computers and other resources purchased with a portion of the grant money, local students have been learning about their community's history by interviewing local residents, collecting letters, diaries, and old photographs, and designing an award-winning Web site.

All this work recently produced the group's second volume of Marion County area oral histories, titled *Rough Times*.

"I don't want my students learning from textbooks," says Munn. "Learning from primary texts allows my students to think critically without the need for an interpreter."



Tom Strickland

Munn had to first teach himself the rules of the oral history game.

"I wasn't taught how to conduct interviews, design Web pages, or publish a book," says Munn. "So I was forced outside the traditional boundaries to learn what I wanted to teach."

Munn's students work hard to make their work available to people of all ages.

"My students don't have it easy," says Munn. "With a term paper and oral presentation, they're learning the necessary academic skills to succeed."

Munn's project has unearthed a treasure trove of fascinating local history, from local Native American lore to tales of Titanic survivors. To see Marion's piece of history, go to marion.lib.in.us/history/index.htm. ✔

Caring Beyond the Classroom

Michael Terrell knew he had to do something fast in 1984, after he found out that one of his first grade students was staying home because she had only two sets of clothes and both were dirty. Terrell's solution? The Cochran Christmas project. Named after his school in Kentucky, the effort has raised $2 million over the past 15 years to buy clothing and other necessities for local students.

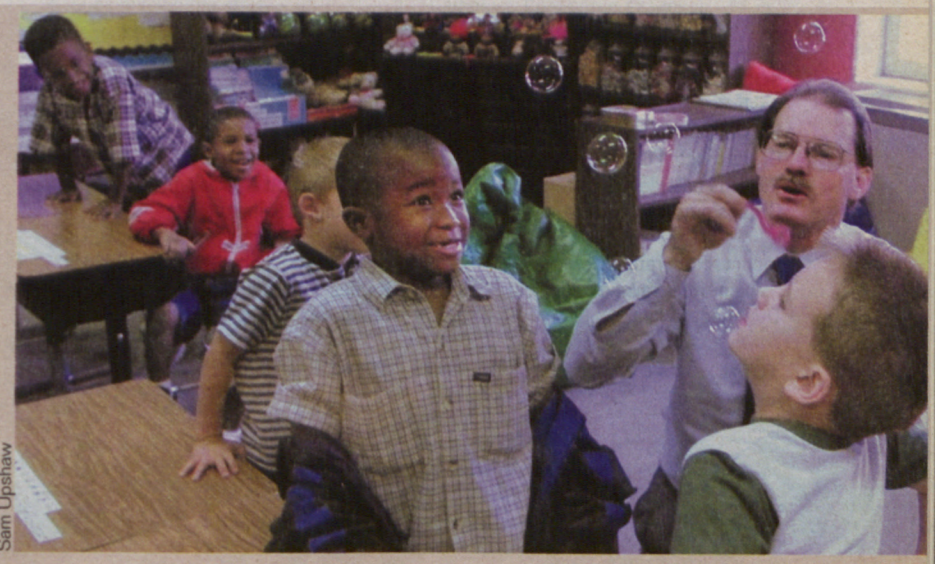
Each year, Terrell, now in his 27th year of teaching, writes local businesses requesting donations of clothing, toys, candy, games, and dollars.

"We're all in this education business together," Terrell explains. "Not just teachers, parents, and administrators, but businesses as well."

One local philanthropist, Richard Williams, has donated $50,000 to the project.

For the past six years Terrell has also produced a newsletter called *ParentShare*. Filled with child-rearing tips, *ParentShare* is combined with a literacy program that partners magazine publishers with underprivileged families. Terrell distributes 250 donated magazines to students so they can practice reading, learn about current events, and research school assignments at home.

"There aren't a lot of jobs or money in the community," Terrell points out.


Sam Upshaw

"The parents can't afford these luxuries," he says.

Terrell was chosen for *USA Today's* first-team All-American Teacher Team, one of only 20 teachers nationwide selected for the honor. ✔

Final Reports of Campaign Revenues and Expenses

NEA Standing Rule 10.E provides as follows:

Campaign Expenses. No portion of dues money collected at the local, regional, state, or national level shall be used to promote the candidacy of any individual for an NEA office.

Using forms provided by the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules, each candidate shall file a preliminary report of campaign revenues and expenses, including projected revenues and expenses, with the committee prior to the opening of nominations at the Representative Assembly. A final report, on the forms provided by the committee, must be filed with the committee no later than thirty (30) days following certification of the election results. The committee shall report to the Representative Assembly, prior to any nominations or elections, whether any candidate has in any manner violated the election rules and regulations. The final report of campaign revenues and expenditures shall be printed in an appropriate NEA publication for inspection by any member.

The following reports were filed in a timely manner and are printed pursuant to Rule 10.E.

Candidates are listed below by office and by alphabetical order within each office.

Candidate for President

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 5,224.39
Persons within the state	$ 3,047.00	Mailing	2,167.49
Groups within the state	9,968.00	Other media materials	8,912.13
Persons outside the state	11,860.00	Hospitality and entertainment	2,357.65
Groups outside the state	5,172.00	Campaign Committee expenses	1,844.72
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	2,375.00	Giveaway(s) if any	11,564.76
Donations in kind	1,926.00	Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$34,348.00	**TOTAL**	$32,071.14

Signed: Robert Chase

Candidates for Executive Committee

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 2,130.27
Persons within the state	$ 6,443.50	Mailing	3,044.33
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	900.00
Persons outside the state	7,369.75	Hospitality and entertainment	400.00
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	3,400.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	3,000.00	Giveaway(s) if any	4,000.00
Donations in kind	6,000.00	Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	3,080.00
TOTAL	$22,813.25	**TOTAL**	$16,954.60

Signed: Eddie Davis, III

Candidate for Vice President

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 1,885.54
Persons within the state	$ 3,772.00	Mailing	783.84
Groups within the state	1,153.00	Other media materials	600.00
Persons outside the state	3,210.00	Hospitality and entertainment	1,214.00
Groups outside the state	3,936.50	Campaign Committee expenses	503.92
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	2,980.00	Giveaway(s) if any	10,083.99
Donations in kind	357.78	Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	329.86
TOTAL	$15,409.28	**TOTAL**	$15,401.15

Signed: Reg Weaver

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 667.94
Persons within the state	$ 890.00	Mailing	209.44
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	474.00
Persons outside the state	1,860.00	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	3,438.07
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	5,646.00	Giveaway(s) if any	185.40
Donations in kind	960.00	Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	1,143.61
TOTAL	$9,356.00	**TOTAL**	$6,118.46

Signed: Lily Eskelsen

Candidates for NEA Director, ESP At Large

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 600.00
Persons within the state	$ 0	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	300.00	Other media materials	0
Persons outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	300.00
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	200.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	140.00	Giveaway(s) if any	990.00
		Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	60.00
Donations in kind	1,580.00		
TOTAL	$2,020.00	**TOTAL**	$2,150.00

Signed: Billy R. Jenkins

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 0
Persons within the state	$0	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Persons outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0	Giveaway(s) if any	0
		Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0		
TOTAL	$0	**TOTAL**	$ 0

Signed: Virgil Butch Chapmen

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 550.00
Persons within the state	$500.00	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Persons outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	50.00	Campaign Committee expenses	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0	Giveaway(s) if any	0
		Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0		
TOTAL	$550.00	**TOTAL**	$ 550.00

Signed: Annie Hutchison

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 282.50
Persons within the state	$ 529.00	Mailing	21.47
Groups within the state	569.00	Other media materials	713.36
Persons outside the state	180.00	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	100.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	450.00	Giveaway(s) if any	718.35
		Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	57.01
Donations in kind	166.50		
TOTAL	$1,894.50	**TOTAL**	$1,892.69

Signed: Cheryl Ann Robinson

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 554.20
Persons within the state	$ 294.00	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	323.00	Other media materials	522.55
Persons outside the state	20.00	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	115.66
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	88.00	Giveaway(s) if any	0
		Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	1,615.00
Donations in kind	1,600.00		
TOTAL	$2,325.00	**TOTAL**	$2,273.21

Signed: Bill Harrison

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$580.00
Persons within the state	$318.00	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Persons outside the state	78.00	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0	Giveaway(s) if any	0
		Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	56.00		
TOTAL	$452.00	**TOTAL**	$580.00

Signed: Inez Crawley

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$182.00
Persons within the state	$246.00	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Persons outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0	Giveaway(s) if any	0
		Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0		
TOTAL	$246.00	**TOTAL**	$182.00

Signed: Deborah A. Minnick

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 80.00
Persons within the state	$306.00	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Persons outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	10.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0	Giveaway(s) if any	216.00
		Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0		
TOTAL	$306.00	**TOTAL**	$306.00

Signed: Jane Logan

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$513.53
Persons within the state	$475.00	Mailing	60.00
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	342.75
Persons outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	17.75
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	309.00	Giveaway(s) if any	0
		Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	150.00		
TOTAL	$934.00	**TOTAL**	$934.03

Signed: Michael Graves

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 708.70
Persons within the state	$ 887.00	Mailing	375.46
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	477.41
Persons outside the state	50.00	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign Committee expenses	200.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	850.00	Giveaway(s) if any	536.26
		Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	150.00
Donations in kind	102.80		
TOTAL	$1,889.80	**TOTAL**	$2,447.83

Signed: Rosemary Riley

Is there a new teacher in the family?

Like blue eyes and baldness, teaching runs in families. If you have a niece or nephew—or even a son or daughter—who'll be graduating this spring and starting a brand-new teaching career in the fall, consider a graduation gift that only a fellow educator can give. The NEA Professional Library has books to help all the graduates on your list get off to a great start.

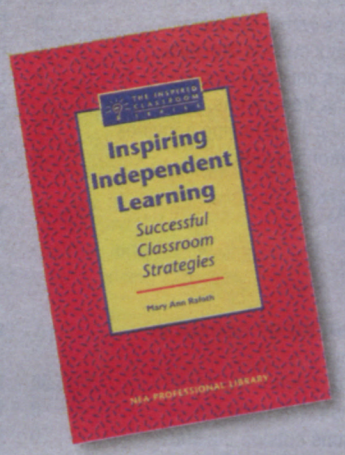
Your daughter will be heading up her own classroom in a few months. Give her a leg up with our best-selling **Graduation Gift Pack**, featuring three great handbooks for teaching rookies.

Countdown to the First Day of School lays out a step-by-step checklist that'll have her poised and ready to succeed the day the school doors open.

Pitfalls & Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers offers the sensible strategies she'll never read in any textbook.

Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers provides the sort of usable advice that every teacher needs and few teachers get.

Item #2170-3-0S-D
Special NEA member Graduation Gift Pack price: **$12.95**
Regular price: Books are **$4.50** each (**$5.95** for nonmembers) if purchased separately

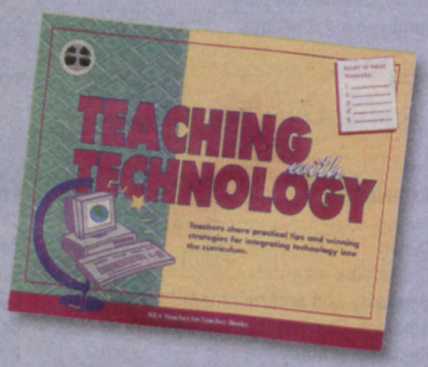


Your niece is going to have her hands full in a bursting-at-the-seams school. As much as you want to tell her she can't do it all, she's going to think she must. Help her feel less overwhelmed by giving her ***Inspiring Independent Learning***, full of tested techniques for helping students take responsibility for their own learning.

Item #2954-2-00-D
Special NEA member price: **$10.95**
Regular price: **$12.95**

Your nephew was born with a mouse in his hand. Help him combine his technical savvy with the theory he learned in his teacher ed program by giving him ***Teaching with Technology***. Written by classroom teachers for classroom teachers, this book offers proven strategies for integrating technology in curriculum and enhancing student learning.

Item #2915-1-00-D
Special NEA member price: **$9.95**
Regular price: **$12.95**



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Saving Kids From Suicide

The suicide rate for kids ages 10 to 14 has doubled over the last 10 years, making suicide the fourth leading cause of death for that age group. For young people 14 to 24, suicide is the third leading cause of death. Angela Oddone, the mental wellness program coordinator for the NEA Health Information Network, offers important information on suicide prevention.

What do we know about the risk of suicide among school-age youth?

Research indicates that girls are more likely than boys to have suicidal thoughts, create a suicide plan, and attempt suicide. But boys more often succeed at committing the act.

A 1997 study of 16,000 high school students found that:

- 20.5 percent had seriously thought about attempting suicide
- 15.7 percent had made a specific plan
- 7.7 percent had made one or more actual suicide attempts
- 2.6 percent had made a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury needing medical attention.

Can schools make a difference?

Yes. A child's problems—particularly with academic achievement—are often more evident at school than they are at home.

And researchers have found a link between suicide and school performance. In a 1988 study of 229 youth who committed suicide, 76 percent experienced a significant decline in academic performance in the year before their deaths.

What do educators need to know?

When suicide is a concern:

- You are not held to confidentiality. "Educators need to know," says Rosemary Rubin, a school counselor and consultant for the Los Angeles Unified School District's Suicide Prevention Unit, "that there is no confidentiality when a child is talking about suicide."
- Act immediately. If a child discloses thoughts about suicide—either directly to you or through a friend or writing assignment—report it right away. Don't wait until the end of the school day.
- Take any indication of suicide seriously. Some statements may be ambiguous—"The world would be better off without me." Take action, even if you're not sure.

RO-MA Stock

What action?

If at all possible, do not tackle suicide prevention alone. If your school has a crisis team, use the team's resources. Work with the school counselor, social worker, or school administrator.

If it's decided that a student is a suicide risk, school personnel should immediately contact the student's parents or guardian. Schools need to have established crisis plans that can guide school personnel on steps to take, including specific roles and concrete procedures.

School personnel can also help connect a student with mental health resources. At LA's Suicide Prevention Unit, a list of community mental health agencies is updated each year to facilitate referrals for students needing professional help.

What features should a school suicide prevention curriculum include?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns that "not all curriculums are necessarily well conceived."

CDC notes that it's important to use a suicide prevention curriculum that doesn't sensationalize suicide. And a program shouldn't normalize suicide either, since that could lessen a protective taboo that our society has in place.

Adds Jon Sandoval, author of *Youth Suicide*: "It's important not to romanticize suicide. Make clear, particularly with adolescents, that any fantasies they might have about somehow being able to witness the effect of suicide on others are unrealistic."

General education programs that teach the facts, warning signs, and risk factors associated with suicide do impart knowledge.

But these programs, research suggests, have had little impact on changing student attitudes about suicide and the importance of seeking help.

The National Institute of Mental Health says that treating suicide prevention within a broader mental health focus—including work on enhancing coping skills and dealing with risk factor issues like substance abuse—is more likely to be successful than addressing suicide as a singular topic. ✔

HEALTH RESOURCES

● The American Psychological Association and MTV Music Television have joined forces to create *Warning Signs*, a violence prevention program that helps kids identify suicide warning signs. Among these signs:

- significant alcohol or drug use
- thoughts about dying/afterlife
- sudden increase in moodiness
- withdrawal or isolation
- major changes in eating or sleeping habits
- feelings of hopelessness, guilt, or worthlessness
- poor control over behavior
- impulsive, aggressive behavior
- drop in quality of school performance or interest in school
- lack of interest in usual activities
- getting into trouble with authority figures
- perfectionism
- giving away important possessions
- hinting at not being around in the future.

Call 800/268-0078 or go to http://helping.apa.org for free copies of the *Warning Signs* guide booklet.

NEA HIN

From the **NEA Health Information Network**

■ Suicide Prevention

For a more detailed discussion of teen suicide and suicide prevention, visit the NEA Health Information Network Web site at www.neahin.org/10.html.

Other resources to consider:

- Center for Mental Health in Schools, Department of Psychology–UCLA, Box 951563, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563, 310-825-3634, Fax 310/206-8716. On the Web at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu.
- KEN: Knowledge Exchange Network. Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, P.O. Box 42490, Washington, DC 20015, 800/789-2647, TDD 301/443-9006. On the Web at http://www.mentalhealth.org.

■ Women's Health

In the next decade, more women than ever before will be age 50 or older.

From 50 on, women face unique health issues. The changes that occur in a woman's body after menopause can increase the risk of getting some diseases.

Other diseases just occur more often in older women.

To learn more about women's health and how to stay healthy in the years ahead, get a free copy of *Ten Questions Women Should Ask Their Doctor* from the Partnership for Longterm Health for Women.

Call toll-free 877/ PM-HEALTH or visit the Web at www.womensorganizations.org.

■ Men's Health

Studies show that men visit or call their doctor less often than women do, and yet they report more chronic illnesses and live, on the average, about seven less years than women do.

Just like women, men have unique health issues and needs that can't be ignored. Learn how to eat better, live longer, break free from stress, get in shape, recognize your body's signals, look your best, and more in the *Men's Maintenance Manual*, a free 33-page booklet from *Men's Health* magazine.

For a free copy, call 800/955-2002, or visit the Web at www.menshealth.com/promotions/index2.html.

To make a difference, we have to do things together.

Like watch TV.

As never before, we now know that violence can erupt anytime, anywhere—even in our nation's schools. We know that before children can learn, and we can work effectively, we must all be safe. And we know that the answer lies in prevention.

NEA is proud to spearhead the battle for school safety with a ten-part TV series offering the best, research-based, user-friendly school safety programs in use around the country.

A new episode of the NEA Safe Schools Now Network airs April 27, 2000 at 2 p.m. EST. Tune in and get the latest information about the one characteristic that all successful school safety programs have in common: intensive community involvement. Learn how educators have organized communities for safety in Mesa, Arizona and Buncombe County, North Carolina and how you can too.

Get with the program. Watch *Forging Community Alliances*, April 27, 2 p.m.

Satellite Coordinates:

EchoStar Coordinates: 61.5 Echo III

EchoStar TV Channel: 915

C BAND Coordinates: Panamsat Galaxy 3R, Transponder 15, 95 degrees west, Horizontal Polarity

Ku BAND Coordinates: Panamsat SBS 6, Vertical Polarity, 74 degrees west

To learn more, go to **http://www.safeschoolsnow.org**

This program is available free with the use of any satellite dish. To apply for a free satellite dish provided by the EchoStar Communications Corporation, go to the website. To purchase a VHS tape, contact the NEA Professional Library, 1/800-229-4200.

This program is also supported by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Justice Department.

nea
National Education Association
1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC
202-822-7746

Looking for Profits? You Could Go to the Track

Q: Lately, I've been hearing about "tracking" stocks. What exactly are they?

A: A tracking stock is a separate class of shares issued by a parent company that "tracks" the performance of one of its business divisions.

Tracking stocks have been around for 15 years. But there's been a great deal of renewed interest in them because many companies are using these stocks to track their fast-growing technology businesses.

In December, for example, AT&T announced plans to create a tracking stock for its cellular business.

A company that issues a tracking stock must provide a separately audited business statement for that division and allocate income and expenses to it.

So a tracking stock is, in effect, like a spinoff that is not spun off.

Among the tracking stocks issued so far this year: AT&T's Liberty Media; Donaldson, Lufkin, Jenrette's DLJ Direct; and Ziff Davis's ZD NetWeb. On deck are DuPont's life sciences unit and Disney's Go.com, its online content provider.

A company that issues a tracking stock is hoping to get credit for a high-growth division within the company without selling that division off. In other words, the company wants to see its stock market price reflect its high-growth business efforts.

An accelerating stock price can mean a great deal to a company. A higher price helps a company recruit and retain management and also makes it easier for a company to acquire other companies.

But Wall Street typically discounts growth within conglomerates. That's partly because each Wall Street analyst follows a particular industry. A company that's in just one business is easier to analyze.

So issuing a tracking stock can help. Sprint is followed by 28 industry analysts. But Sprint PCS, its tracking stock issued in November 1998, has 32 analysts—and is up fivefold in a year.

Tracking stocks are issued in one of two ways. The first is by issuing them as a dividend to current shareholders. In other words, shareholders might receive one share of the tracker for every 10 shares they own in the parent.

The second method, which is growing more common, is for the parent to issue the tracking stock as an initial public offering, a more attractive option for the company because it raises money.

All this "tracking" may be good for a company, but not so good for shareholders. There's an inherent conflict of interest in having one corporate board that's responsible for two separate divisions, with their own stocks.

The shareholders of that new stock do not have voting rights. The corporate board is responsible for making decisions that are best for all shareholders of the parent company.

But what happens when the interests of the parent are at odds with the interests of the subsidiary?

How are company resources allocated in that case? How are expenses allocated? How can investors who have a stake in the tracking stock make certain they are getting a fair shake?

Despite the spectacular performance of a few trackers, overall performance is ho-hum.

The average overall return on tracking stocks, since each began trading, is 30 percent. This return is roughly one-third of the return you would have if you'd invested in the Standard & Poor's 500 index when each stock was introduced, according to the business press.

So before you rush into tracking stocks, to get a pure play on a dot.com or telecommunications company, think about the parent company that comes along with it—and what that parent is trying to get from you as an investor.

Q: I'm worried about having too much technology in my mutual fund portfolio. How can I find out how much I have?

A: Two Web sites should be helpful. First is www.morningstar.com.

This site, sponsored by Morningstar, the well-known mutual fund publishing company, provides an X-ray feature that helps you look inside your portfolio and see what industry sectors make up your mutual fund.

Similarly, www.moneycentral.com, a site where I publish a weekly column, provides a Fund Finder that helps you see, under "portfolio composition," what's in your portfolio. Under "top holdings," you can see the 10 companies that account for the biggest share of your portfolio.

Technology has been the engine of growth in the stock market over the past year.

All investors should have some technology in their portfolio, but investors also should, as you point out, be careful that an investment in technology doesn't make up the entire portfolio. ✔

—Mary Rowland

Mary Rowland contributes to several financial planning and investment magazines.

Thrifty Educator

Each month, NEA Today *prints money-saving tips from NEA members. This month's tips come from Coleen Collete, a fourth grade teacher at Memorial Elementary School in Hopedale, Massachusetts, and Paula Thompson, a retired special education teacher from Mobile, Alabama.*

Coleen Collete: "I ask my local card shop for leftover envelopes that aren't used because the cards that go with the envelopes weren't sold. Normally, the card shop's procedure is to throw these envelopes out. I take the most brightly colored ones and use them to send home notes to parents. The color makes the envelope stand out among the school papers and gives my note a better chance of being delivered."

Paula Thompson: "Bulletin board paper is not easy to measure and put up, so I use gift wrap instead. After stapling it to the center of my board, I add a pre-cut corrugated, colorful border. Gift wrap does the trick for holiday themes, and it also can be used for backgrounds of subject features such as dinosaurs, jungles, and space themes. Let your imagination flow at your local gift wrap department."

If you have a money-saving tip from your workplace, send it along to neatoday@nea.org. We'll print the best of the bunch in a future issue.

FACTOID

The NEA Member Benefits Member Services Center has spoken with over 500,000 NEA members over the last five years.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

We all have different insurance needs at different times in our lives.

One plan that can adjust to your needs is the NEA Level Premium Term Life Insurance Plan. Provided by the NEA Members Insurance Trust® and underwritten by Prudential, the Level Premium Plan allows you to lock in the same affordable rate from the time you initiate coverage until you reach age 70.

Up to $250,000 is available for NEA members up to age 49, when you're likely to need the most coverage. Up to $100,000 is available for members between ages 50 and 69, when your coverage needs tend to decrease.

And up to $10,000 is available for members over age 70.

As an added benefit, the Plan will waive your premium if you're under age 60 and become totally disabled for six months or more.

Call NEA Member Benefits at 1/800-637-4636 today to find out more. Or check www.neamb.com.

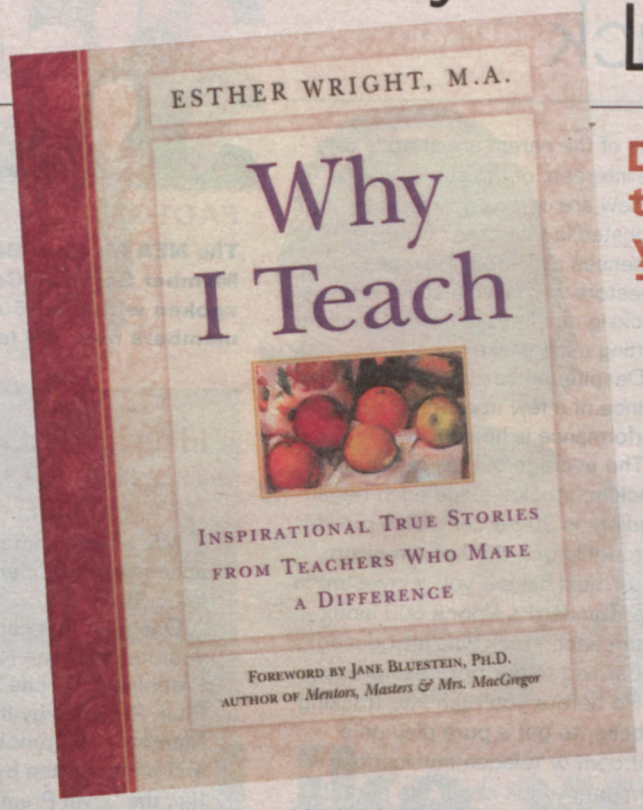
Good news for NEA Credit Card holders! NEA Member Benefits and MBNA America now offer Net Access, a service that lets you check your NEA Credit Card account online, any time.

You can pay your bill, check your balance, or register multiple accounts right from your personal computer. And don't worry—all transactions are secure.

To use this new service, you must first enroll by providing information to verify your identity and cardholder status.

Then you can create your Net Access profile, with your own unique user name and password. You can log on to Net Access through the Web at www.neamb.com.

Why Do You Teach? Let's Count the Reasons


ESTHER WRIGHT, M.A.
Why I Teach
INSPIRATIONAL TRUE STORIES FROM TEACHERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
FOREWORD BY JANE BLUESTEIN, PH.D.
AUTHOR OF Mentors, Masters & Mrs. MacGregor

Did a student talk back to you today? Did an irate mother request yet another parent conference? Take heart.

EXCERPT

Education is not just what we learn in school. We have the opportunity to grow and become better communicators, partners, parents, teachers, students, and workers in everything we do. Self-education is a lifelong task. There are always more faces to find along the trail. And there will always be new trails to walk.

—Tim Merriman
Fort Collins, Colorado

Teaching is one way to make a difference, to touch one or many in a manner that will make the world a better place. In doing so, I reap as much if not more, than I have sown. I can't think of a better way to spend a life.

—Dick Deis
Corvallis, Oregon

WHY I TEACH: INSPIRATIONAL TRUE STORIES FROM TEACHERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
By **Esther Wright**
Prima Publishing, $12.95, 193 pp.
(Buy this book online at www.nea.org/neatoday/0004/resource.html)

If you need a daily lift or a moment's pause to remember why you even entered this profession, choose a chapter, any chapter, from this book.

What is so surprising in this small volume of 38 essays is that so many poignant themes emerge that are supported by delightful anecdotes from teacher experiences.

For instance, a Kansas teacher compares the nine months of each school year to giving birth to a new class of graduates.

Some contributors recall teachers who inspired them to become teachers. Others point to special students who motivated them to remain in the profession—students afflicted with disease, drug addiction, or poverty, but who have taught them and fellow students what it is to be kind, courageous, and generous.

Some contributors write of immigrant kids who beat the odds and graduate to success. There's even a grateful essay from a husband who appreciates his wife's profession because his mind stays active as they discover, together, teaching materials from throwaway and discontinued store stock.

From these essays, we realize that, like us, our colleagues teach because they love learning. They spend their own money on supplies. They get more from their students than they give. They cope daily with the inequities in education. They need support to be effective; and they agree that real learning doesn't always occur in the classroom.

Policy makers and education "experts" should be required to read this book to learn that teaching is an empty vocation without love and compassion—and that the caring side of the profession can't be assessed by the state or national standards they're demanding.

And community leaders and politicians should be required to read this book to realize how important their support is to help students who lag academically, those students who are poor, abused, and forgotten.

Ask people what they remember from school and chances are that their memories will be of some special teacher, a person who saw their talent and realized their worth, taught them to think creatively, demanded they give more than they thought possible, inspired them, and cared about their future.

Someone like the teacher described in this book who, with his class, buried a dead pigeon on the playground to help his students realize that death is inextricably linked with life.

Why I Teach celebrates the teaching profession by validating our work, especially on a personal level. Our students are indeed our future. Just ask a woman who was administered life-saving radiation by a former student.

"How do you stand it?" That's what people ask us about our profession. Maybe one day, they'll understand why we teach.

In the meantime, this book is a welcome reminder of why we teach. It's a calling, not just a job, and it's really who we are.

—Kathy Megyeri
High school English teacher,
Sandy Springs, Maryland

BOOKS by NEA Members

What's the Recipe for Friends?
Greg Williamson, illustrated by Greg Abele
Join Freddy as he embarks on his first day at a new school and unfolds his mother's recipe for friends. When Freddy befriends his neighbor and classmate, Billy, he learns that the basic ingredients—politeness, kindness, and sharing—can never be forgotten when trying to make friends.
24 pp. $7.99 plus $2 s&h to Peerless Publishing, P.O. Box 20466 Ferndale, MI 48220, 248/542-1930, fax 248/542-3895.

The Cafés of Paris: A Guide
Christine Graf
The Cafés of Paris will help tourists discover the people, places, and charms of Paris. Graf lists cafés by location, price, and proximity to famous attractions, which makes for easy reading. The book also features short reviews and episodes about notable visitors to the city's cafés, with descriptions of characters from Ernest Hemingway to Henry James.
192 pp. $14.95 plus $4 s&h to Interlink Publishing Group, Inc. 46 Crosby St., Northampton, MA 01060,800/238-5465, fax 413/582-6731.

Supporting Students With Learning Needs
Marcia Conti-D'Antonio, Robert Bertrando, Joanne Eisenberge
This book—designed for educators working with diverse student populations—covers planning, scheduling, instruction, and assessment for teaching in block schedules. It covers information on teaching vs. coverage, offers advice on cooperative planning, and includes supportive references.
164 pp. $29.95 plus $5 s&h to Eye On Education, 6 Depot Way West, Larchmont, NY 10538 914/833-0551, fax 914/833-076.

Empowerment in the Classroom
Dr. Arlene Kaiser
For ideas and strategies for the empowered classroom, turn to this book, which is developed from 20 years worth of experience. The author, a middle school teacher and the author of *11 Ways to Keep Your Enthusiasm for Teaching*, offers recommendations for educators who want to be effective and successful with students.
82 pp. $10 for NEA members, plus $3 s&h to August Press, 3424 Spring Creek Lane, Milpitas, CA 95035, 408/ 946-4444.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Making After School Count

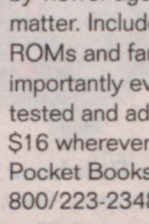
Every issue of this publication, produced by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, spotlights educational programs across the nation and features interviews from real students and volunteers. You can get the inside scoop on working programs from Head Start to Freedom School in Philadelphia, PA, as well as information on starting your own youth empowerment program.
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
1200 Mott Foundation Building
Flint, MI 48502 800/645-1766.

Lolo & Red-Legs

When Lolo finds and captures a Mexican "red-leg" tarantula outside of his home in Southern California, his ordinary summer becomes one fun-filled adventure. After Red-Legs is discovered missing, Lolo and three friends team up to play detective and uncover the mysterious tracks of Red-Legs' disappearance.
$6.95 plus $4 s&h to Northland Publishing Company, P.O. Box 1389 Flagstaff, AZ 86002
800/346-3257, fax 800/257-9082.

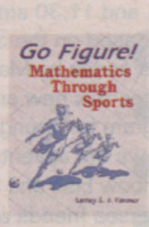
You Know You're a Veteran Teacher When...

You'll find a host of funny phrases in this book, created by four teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools. Every page comically commemorates the amazing job teachers do. $7.37 plus $1.50 s&h to Jeanine Turpie, 15309 West Via Montoya, Sun City West, AZ 85375.



Guide to the Best Children's Videos

What are your children watching? This guide helps parents navigate the world of children's video media. It lists only recommended videos categorized by viewer age and program subject matter. Includes evaluations of CD-ROMs and family films, but most importantly every program is kid-tested and adult-approved.
$16 wherever books are sold.
Pocket Books
800/223-2348.



Go Figure!

Looking for ideas to make math relevant? In *Go Figure! Mathematics Through Sports* measurement, geometry, statistics, and economics come together through a sports theme. This guidebook gives detailed instructions to teachers for lesson implementation and student assessment. From "warm-ups" to "game plans," getting your students into mathematical shape will be fun, exciting, and relevant. Go figure! For grades 6-12. $24.50 plus $6 s&h to Teacher Ideas Press, P.O. Box 6633, Englewood, CO 80155
800/237-6124.

Young Scientists

Engage young children in the fun of science. *Science Play! Beginning Discoveries for 2 to 6 year olds* challenges children's innate curiosity and helps parents turn play into opportunities for enrichment. Even the busiest parents will be able to enhance their child's early years by helping them to build skills and self-confidence by using the five easy steps of the scientific method. $12.95 plus $3.20 s&h. From Williamson Publishing Co., P.O. Box 185, Charlotte, VT 05445. 800-234-8791. On the Web at www.williamsonbooks.com.

Reading for Understanding

Ruth Schoenbach, Cynthia Greenleaf, Christine Cziko, Lori Hurwitz

"Any teacher who puts a book in front of a student is a reading teacher," write the authors. Their new book addresses the growing difficulty students have reading and understanding academic texts. Written for content teachers in secondary schools, the book offers value for all educators. Also featured are classroom lessons and exercises.
193 pp. $19.95 plus $5.50 s&h to Jossey-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104.

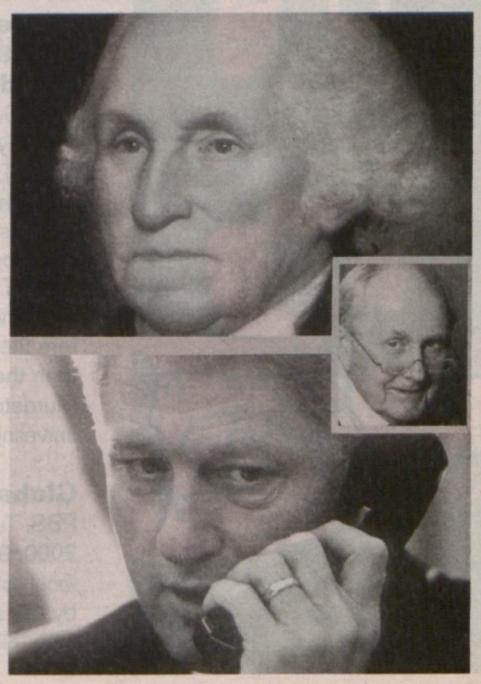
TVTIPS

The American President

PBS, Sunday-Thursday, April 9-13, 9-11 pm ET

Check local listings.

This 10-part series tells the story of the American Presidency, examining how the office has changed with each man who has held it. Each one-hour episode profiles several Presidents under themes that range from expansion or abuse of presidential powers and military backgrounds to impact on international affairs. The series features interviews with President Clinton and all the living former presidents except Ronald Reagan. Check www.americanpresident.org for Presidential history resources, information on the 2000 election year, and the student-run *OurVote* magazine. ✔



NEW from the NEA Professional Library

Implementing Standards-Based Education
NEA Student Assessment Series
Robert J. Marzano and John S. Kendall
90 pp., $7.95, #2072-3-00-F

Have you been told which standards to address in your classes? Then you'll want to know the four steps to follow to organize your content, plan which assessments to use, organize your grade book, and redesign your report card.

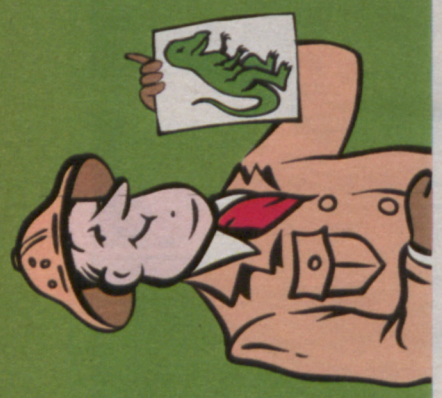
Where do you begin to help your students using standards? By thinking about external tests and performance tasks and portfolios. This book describes two distinct approaches to using standards in the classroom—*direct*, in which a specific set of standards is mandated for each class or subject, and *indirect*, in which teachers have more flexibility in teaching and assessing standards in their classroom due to the nature of external tests.

For more information or to order, call 800/229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books.

EXCERPT

One of the biggest mistakes a teacher can make is to ignore the standards movement. To do this is to put individual students at great risk in that they might not be adequately prepared to meet the challenges that standards-based education will certainly impose on them.

In this book, we have attempted to describe the various approaches to standards-based education and the advantages and disadvantages of those approaches. Perhaps more important, we have attempted to explain how each approach can and should affect what happens in individual classrooms.

Ask Jeeves For Kids!
AJkids.com
Why are dinosaurs extinct?
Do your kids have questions? They can get the answers at AJkids.com.
Ask!

© 2000 Ask Jeeves, Inc. All rights reserved.

TV TIPS

Fail Safe

CBS, Sunday, April 9, 9-11 p.m. ET. Broadcast live, this special movie presentation revisits the nuclear tensions of the Cold War as the U.S. President and Soviet premier struggle to divert an American pilot mistakenly ordered to bomb Moscow. Like the 1964 film, the program is based on the Cuban Missile Crisis-era novel by Eugene Burdick. KIDSNET has produced a combined print and online guide with activities, historical background, and interactive materials to help teachers use the film in social studies, history, government, language arts, and media literacy curricula. Visit www.KIDSNET.org for more information.

Walking With Dinosaurs

Discovery Channel, Sunday, April 16, 7-10 p.m. ET. Combining computer animation, animatronics, and wildlife film-making techniques, this three-hour documentary recreates the prehistoric ecosystem of the dinosaurs. Produced in consultation with a team of paleontologists, the program realistically depicts the sounds and day-to-day lives of species from air, land, and sea. A series of companion books is available in stores, and the Web site features images, activities, and background on dinosaur research. Visit www.discovery.com for more information.

Masterpiece Theatre: David Copperfield

PBS, Sunday, April 16-Monday, April 17, 9-11 p.m. ET, check local listings. This adaptation of Charles Dickens's semi-autobiographical novel follows the coming-of-age of young David as he suffers the wrath of his stepfather, the abusive Mr. Murdstone, and battles the sniveling clerk Uriah Heep.

Global Warming

PBS, Tuesday, April 18, 2000, 9:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. Co-presented by the series "Frontline" and "Nova," this documentary presents the basic science of the greenhouse effect and examines some of the more promising solutions. The program visits several locations where the global warming issue has become critical, including the Greenland ice cap, the growing industrial cities of China and India, and Washington, D.C., where legislators set environmental policy precedents that affect the world. Visit www.pbs.org/nova for transcripts and educational materials.

Jason and the Argonauts

NBC, Sunday, April 30-Monday, May 1, 9-11 p.m. ET. This miniseries from Hallmark Entertainment retells the Greek myth of Jason, a young hero who must find the Golden Fleece that will help him reclaim his father's kingdom from the evil King Pelias. Sailing on the *Argo*, Jason and his team of adventurers face monsters, gods, and other dangerous obstacles during their quest. Visit www.nbc.com for more information.

Witness: Voices From the Holocaust

PBS, Monday, May 1, 2000, 10:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. This program combines eyewitness testimony, unique film footage, and personal photographs to explore the experience of the Holocaust from the perspective of individuals who survived the Nazi era. Weaving the stories of Jews, survivors, Hitler Youth, clergy, American POWs, resistance fighters, bystanders, and liberators, the narrative provides a rare and intimate portrait of the time, the place, and the people. Visit www.pbs.org for a companion Web site with images, stories, and background information.

Between the Lions

PBS, Monday-Friday, 10:30-11 a.m. ET. This new

series uses a combination of music, stories, animation, live-action, and puppetry to introduce kids to the joys of reading. The program features a family of lions who run a library where books come to life, making the reading process accessible and entertaining for young viewers. The companion site, pbskids.org/lions, includes details about the series' curriculum partners as well as children's activities and educational support for teachers and parents.

The Rainbow Fish

HBO Family, Daily, 6:30-7 a.m. and 11:30 am-noon ET. Based on the children's book series by Marcus Pfister, this new animated program for young viewers follows the adventures of Rainbow Fish and his undersea friends as they learn gentle life lessons about sharing, understanding differences, helping others, and friendship. Visit www.hbo.com for more information.

Disney's The Weekenders

ABC, Saturdays, 8:30-9:00 a.m. ET. This new animated series focuses on the weekend adventures of four adolescent friends who look for new ways to have fun while negotiating the obstacles of adolescent growth. Unified in their friendship, the kids cover a wide range of personalities, from the brainy, inquisitive leader to the outspoken tomboy. Rated E/I, the series has been designed with the help of educators to provide pro-social messages and themes. Visit www.disney1.com for more information.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Detective Work

Arthur Conan Doyle: Beyond Baker Street. This is a book about the creator

of Sherlock Holmes stories, though these were only a small part of Conan Doyle's total work. $22 plus $5 s&h from Oxford University Press, 2001 Evans Rd., Cary, NC 27513, 800/451-7556, Fax 919/677-1303. On the Web at www.oup.com.

Ordinary Things

The Light Bulb and The Telephone, part of the Atheneum Young Readers

Series. Well-illustrated and clearly written, these books focus on important inventions that are often taken for granted. A special foldout in each book shows in detail how the invention works. $17.95 plus $3 s&h from Atheneum Press, 100 Front St., Riverside, NJ 08075, 800/223-2348, Fax 800/943-9831. On the Web at www.SimonSaysKids.com.

Reading Perspectives

Perspectives on Shared Reading: Planning and Practice. A book by two teachers, mother and daughter, detailing strategies for implementing shared reading for kids

from kindergarten through second grade. Among the topics that the authors

address: developing teaching skills with texts and encouraging student-parent participation. $10 plus $4 s&h from Heinemann, Box 5007, West Port, CT 06881. 800/793-2154, Fax 203/222-1502. See www.heinemann.com.

Classroom Literature

Nikki Giovanni in the Classroom: "the same ol' danger but a brand new pleasure" is the first volume in the National Council of Teachers of English's new High School literature series. Along with literature teaching tips, the book includes various poems, essays, and interviews by Giovanni. $12.95 plus $2 s&h from National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096. 877-369-6283. On the Web at www.ncte.org/books/98/Jago52120.html.

Filling in the Blanks

The untold stories of Black cowboys and cowgirls in American history is what this small book is all about. There are short articles about Black rodeos and the legacy of the Black cowboy. $4.95 plus $2 s&h, from Cobblestone Publishing, 30 Grove St., Suite C, Peterborough, NH 03458. 603/924-7209, Fax 603/924-7380. Available on the Web at www.cobblestone.pub.com.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEA Member To Receive Nation's Top Teaching Honor

The National Teacher of the Year Program continues as the nation's oldest, most prestigious teaching honor. This year, one of four NEA member finalists will be selected as its 50th recipient. In April, the President of the United States will introduce the 2000 National Teacher of the Year to the American people. This year's exemplary finalists, profiled below, represent the states of California, Oklahoma, Michigan, and Minnesota.

Teacher of the Year Finalist: A Veteran Music Man

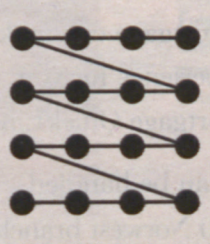
P. Brett Smith, Minnesota Teacher of the Year, could hardly sit still as a student. "I had very high energy that exploded when I felt trapped in the chair of my small desk," recalls this 15-year educator, in his first year as third through fifth grade music teacher at O.H. Anderson Elementary in Mahtomedi. Smith was challenged by much more than just an excess of

energy. Tests showed that he had several learning disabilities, including dyslexia. "These revelations really boosted my self-esteem and helped to shape my focus as a teacher," says Smith. "I respond to my students' desire to learn much more than I do to their test aptitude." Smith, who has also taught at the middle school, high school, and collegiate levels, is currently the president-elect of the Minnesota Music Education Association.

✳ COMMUNICATION.

THE ANTI-DRUG.

A positive relationship cannot exist without communication. Research shows that kids believe they have valuable things to say. When teachers or mentors ask them and listen genuinely, **it helps build self-esteem and confidence.** Also it demonstrates that you value a relationship with them and support their intelligence and burgeoning independence. The important thing to remember about drugs is that **it's not a five minute talk. It's a dialogue.** As kids grow, they will need more information relevant to their exposure. In general, smoking marijuana is harmful. The younger a kid is, the more it may be. Research shows that people who smoke it before age 15 **are 7 times more likely to use other drugs.** It also shows that people who didn't smoke marijuana by age 21 were more likely to never smoke it. For more information visit www.theantidrug.com, www.teachersguide.org, www.straightscoop.org, or call 800.788.2800.



Communication is connection. During their teenage years, kids are exposed to an ever widening variety of people and influences. You are one of the most important. Tell kids that you care about them. Praise them when they do well, no matter how small the accomplishment. Stay connected.

Getting to know kids and letting them know you is one of the most effective drug deterrents. Through their teenage years, this is not always easy. Even still, research shows that kids still want this to happen, even as they are exploring and growing into their own individuality. So take time every day to listen to them and build your relationship. This message is brought to you by the Office of National Drug Control Policy/Partnership for a Drug-Free America.

Teacher of the Year Finalist: Giving Back to the Profession

With 35 years of teaching experience, Dr. Marilyn Whirry, California Teacher of the Year, calls her life "a canvas with swirling brush strokes that depict the motifs of my experience." These motifs include the presentation of more than 350 workshops to teachers, including 28 on reading and writing strategies in the summer of 1999 alone. Whirry's teaching philosophy centers around seeking, embracing, and celebrating the act of learning. Mary-Anna Rae, a former student, says of Whirry: "In everything she does, she always makes it clear that she is listening, attending to the students' deepest thinking."

Teacher of the Year Finalist: Crossing Cultural Divides

"I remember filling notebooks in the mornings, writing my wishes, thoughts, and plans for the future," recalls Michigan Teacher of the Year Margaret Holtschlag. "These journals were filled with my dreams to be a teacher." This "ultimate middle child," who teaches at Murphy Elementary School in Haslett, says that in her family of 12 children, her parents nurtured independence and cooperation. These same qualities are fostered in Holtschlag's fourth-grade classroom. Visitors will see students meeting in literature circles, sending daily weather observations to scientists at NASA, and previewing CNN Newsroom tape. Her students also benefit from her commitment to local and global education. Holtschlag serves as a founding member of Linking All Types of Teachers to Cross-Cultural Education.

Teacher of the Year Finalist: A Life Schooled in History

Perhaps only in social studies would an educator's hobby of antique collecting coincide so much with teaching. A colleague who has team-taught with Mitsuye Conover, Oklahoma Teacher of the Year and collector of World War I memorabilia, says: "She is utterly absorbed into the teaching of American history and her instruction is always characterized by a quiet but intense American patriotism." Conover's major influences in joining the "helping profession of teaching" are shaped by her experiences as a toddler in a Japanese internment camp and the impact of her first grade teacher, who developed a love of reading in a child with, at the time, virtually no proficiency in English. Conover is an eleventh-grade advanced placement American history teacher at Bartlesville High School.

NEA Honorees

NEA holds an annual awards ceremony to honor individuals, organizations, and affiliate Associations that have contributed to human-and-civil-rights goals and aspirations. This year's NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner, at which some 11 awards will be presented, will be held on July 2, 2000, at Chicago's Hilton Hotel and Towers. Contact Doris Belton 202/822-7713.

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HFNT0400

Becoming a teacher can bring honor to your family and your whole community. That's the message going out to America from NEA and musical legend Carlos Santana.

This year's biggest Grammy winner, Santana is the star of a new 30-second NEA television public service announcement that's been distributed nationwide.

"We all have something we love—music, art, science," says Santana. "Why not teach it?"

The Carlos Santana public service announcement is a joint effort of NEA and the California Teachers Association. Some 40 California television stations have been asked to air the CTA version. Another 200 received the national NEA version, which leads viewers to the NEA Web site for more information.

"Carlos brings a message of hope and encouragement for young people," says NEA President Bob Chase. "We're honored to have him as a part of our efforts to recruit the best possible teaching force for America's public schools."

To see the Carlos Santana/NEA public service announcement, just visit the NEA Web site at www.nea.org.

DIVERSITY Calendar

October

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History Month
The month of October was selected to commemorate the anniversaries of the first two lesbian and gay marches on Washington in October 1979 and 1987. Among the special commemorations during October is National Coming Out Day on October 11, which marks the largest gathering to date of gays and lesbians supporting gay rights in Washington, D. C. in 1987.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month
The idea of recognizing the importance of employing disabled persons has existed since 1945. The monthly observance was established by presidential proclamation in 1998.

Diwali, October 26
Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, is one of the most important Hindu festivals of the year and marks the beginning of the Hindu new year. Long ago, this festival represented the commencement of the commercial year and was a time for the spirits of the dead to revisit the homes of the living.

November

National American Indian Heritage Month
National American Indian Heritage Month celebrates the history and contributions of Native Americans. Several national organizations have been formed over the years to address American Indian and Alaska Native issues. The National Indian Education Association, founded in 1969, is the largest and oldest Indian education organization in the country.

Ramadan, November 27
Ramadan, the ninth and holiest month of the Islamic year, traditionally begins with the sighting of the new moon. This time of spiritual and physical purification commemorates the revelation of the Quran to Muhammad on Lailat Ul-Qadr. Fasting during this month is one of the five fundamental religious duties of Islam. The fast ends when the new moon is again sighted.

December

World AIDS Day, December 1
World AIDS Day is a day designated by the United Nations and the World Health Organization to increase awareness and education about AIDS.

Emperor's Birthday, December 23
Emperor's Birthday is a Japanese national holiday that serves as a day of rest and an opportunity for people to be received by the Emperor in Tokyo.

Boxing Day, December 26
Boxing Day is observed throughout British-influenced countries. The original meaning may have come from a small box passed for donations on this day or from boxed gifts being passed to those people who render services to the public.

A Social Security Virtual Conference

Here is your opportunity to participate in the national debate on Social Security reform.

From April 10-24, NEA will host a virtual symposium, Social Security: Will It Be There For You? The Pros and Cons to Privatization.

All NEA members are encouraged to participate via the Internet in online discussions during this unique opportunity.

Bob Blancato, the former executive director of the White House Conference on Aging, will moderate the forum, which will also include Social Security and senior policy experts.

Register now for the online symposium. Go to: www.nea.org/socialsecurity/index.htm.

Rich Rewards

Three NEA members are recipients of the first Dorothy Rich Learning Leader Awards, honoring their work with families and communities to build stronger student achievement. All focus on practices that connect students, schools, and the community.

Dorothy Rich is best known as the author of Megaskills. *Her nonprofit Home and School Institute sponsors the Dorothy Rich Learning Leaders Awards. The Insitute works to help families and educators build children's achievement in school and beyond.*

Thomas Fairweather, assistant principal at Bluff Park School in Hoover, Alabama, combines expertise in technology and parent education. Fairweather has created a monitoring system to enable her school to keep better track of students with social, emotional, and academic problems.

Marie Hoernek is a Title 1 teacher at Roche-A-Cri Elementary in Arkdale, Wisconsin. Her focus is on math and science family nights. Her entire school participates in activities that have children and families reading together at home.

Harold House is a middle school teacher at Arlington Woods Middle School in Indianapolis, Indiana. His focus is on providing mentors for children with special needs, including minority, and incarcerated youth.

WEB WINNERS

Disney Learning Tools

Make learning fun with ideas for your classroom from Disney's Imagineers. EduStation provides educators with information and projects in the arts, social science, math, language arts, and science. Catch up on the latest happenings with the educator events calendar or learn how to teach technology-style with a cyberlesson plan. This Web site also features everything from Web cards to music downloads. On the Web at

http://disney.go.com/educational/classroom.html.

Word Find Puzzles

Take the challenge: Put your word detective skills to the test with Web Word Find. This archive of printable word puzzles provides the player with vocabulary practice following different themes. On the Web at www.eduplace.com/kids/games/wwf/index.html.

News in Schools

News happens at every hour of every day, and now you can bring what's happening around the globe into the classroom. CNN Newsroom is a free multimedia instructional program that includes daily Features Desks such as Health and the Environment as well as in-depth news stories and coverage of world and regional events tailored exclusively for students. The online daily classroom guide includes lessons with thought-provoking questions and educational links to today's top stories. The CNN Newsroom is cablecast on CNN from 4:30-5 a.m. ET weekdays, 12 months a year. Enrolled schools may record each day's program and use at their convenience. Join

the program by calling 1-800-344-6216 or fill out the online application. On the Web at www.turnerlearning.com/newsroom.

Help With Funding

Grant writing is made easy and fast with this Web site. With the click of a button at Schoolgrants.org, educators can locate federal and local grants and read tips on writing them. The site also lists other ways to raise cash with links to fundraising programs, scholarships, contests, and more. On the Web at www.schoolgrants.org.

Africa Online

Take a journey to the continent that houses 50 nations of people with this Web site created by students. Explore Africa's many unique geographic features and wildlife without leaving the classroom. Beautiful pictures and well-organized links help students and educators with research projects. Test your

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trivia with quizzes for the novice and the advanced learner. On the Web at http://library.thinkquest.org/16645.

Is It Summer Vacation Yet?

Even though summer hasn't arrived, you can take a well-deserved "virtual" trip on The American Experience, Way Back: U.S. History for Kids. Vivid photos and descriptive text take you to interesting places around the United States. Other themes featured in the site's archives include Technology in 1900, Gold Rush, Flight, and Stand Up For Your Rights. Check www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/kids/summer/.

CPR Internet Guide

Learn how to help save lives with this Web site designed as a supplement to CPR training courses. Packed with information about CPR and what to do if someone is choking, everyone can learn important skills that will help in an emergency. Download the CPR video demonstration for a multimedia approach or have your questions answered in the "ask the doctor" section. On the Web at www.learncpr.org/index.html.

Going to See A Movie?

If you're having trouble deciding what movie to see this weekend, don't throw out your popcorn yet. Designed to give you movie suggestions based on your personal interests, the site is a modern way to choose from a variety of new releases and old classics. This "collaborative filtering research project" from the University of Minnesota also has options for you to rate movies for other site users and check out movie reviews. On the Web at www.movielens.umn.edu.

Study Guides and Strategies

A student's ability to master writing and studying often determines success in school. *Study Guides and Strategies* is an online manual that helps students learn how to learn. These tips and tricks can assist with test taking, studying, writing essays, participating in the classroom and more. On the Web at www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/.

From Stone to Silicon: The History Of Computers

Created by a team of students, this Web site makes learning about computers easy and fun. From the first human-made numerical calculator to the iMAC, Computer Chronicles from Stone to Silicon is divided into five main sections of computer history, ending with an important event in each stage. You can also read about people's predictions for the future of computers and post your own. On the Web at http://library.thinkquest.org/22522/index.html.

The Forces Behind Fun

With the Amusement Park Physics Web site, students can learn about science while discussing a topic they can relate to. The site

centers around five common amusement park rides and lets students explore the in's and out's of physics online. Experiment suggestions offer them a chance to design their own roller coaster or learn about weightlessness with a freefall water experiment. Many local amusement parks also offer Physics is Phun Days in March, April, and May, where students can perform physics experiments while riding rides. On the Web at www.learner.org/exhibits/parkphysics/freefall2.html.

Into The Unknown With Lewis and Clark

Explore Thomas Jefferson's Corps of Discovery project as you travel with his secretary Meriwether Lewis and his friend William Clark on a four-year expedition into the unknown American

West. Brought to you by PBS Online, you can hear modern-day testimony from experts on the monumental mission of the 1800s. Lesson plans are also available in social studies, math, science, and language arts. On the Web at www. pbs.org/lewisandclark.

Stay Informed

Want to check out the latest daily news centered on education issues? Washingtonpost.com recently launched a new addition to its Web site dedicated solely to education topics. In addition to continuously updated national news stories, the site features special reports, columnists, and guides for parents and much more. On the Web at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education.

Space View

See a new perspective on the world through the eyes of the shuttle Endeavor's high-resolution 3-D images project. The site features the history of the project,

world maps, and topography centering on the space mission. On the Web at www.jpl.nasa.gov/srtm.

Harry Houdini

Harry Houdini becomes "virtually" alive through the magic of the Web. This companion to the PBS program has a teacher's

guide, the magician's biography, escape secrets, a timeline, and poster gallery. On the Web at www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/houdini.

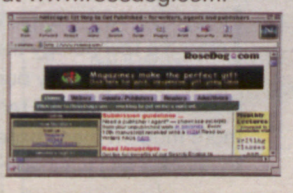
World History

Which came first, Appanage Russia or Slavic Russia? Now you can find out quickly and easily on this new site that chronicles the world's history. Spanning East and West, from religion

to technology, this site makes referencing dates as easy as a click of a button. On the Web at campus.northpark.edu/history/WebChron.

Get Published

Do you like to write but are not sure how to get published? Visit this site that links writers with publishers and provides tips and tricks to future authors on how to get published. On the Web at www.rosedog.com.



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in the Light Lane

Getting Untracked

First grade is sometimes a difficult transition for the young learner.

One of my students was unable to stay on track to complete an assignment. We devised a reward system whereby he would receive a sticker after he completed each part.

After several weeks, this student had a particularly good day and completed the entire assignment along with the class. Our principal stopped in that day, and I told her about our good day. The principal returned shortly and gave my student a new pencil sporting the 3-D message "A Winning Attitude!"

While packing to go home for the day, I noticed the new pencil left on my student's desk—and remembered all the telephone calls and notes home about uncooperative behavior. So I said, "You forgot your pencil! Aren't you going to take it home and show your mom?"

"Oh no!" he replied. "My mom said don't bring any attitude into this house!"

Patricia Dimichino
Elizabeth, New Jersey

I took my self-contained class, learning disabled students, on a field trip to the Meadowlands facilities. We were able to visit all three sporting venues.

At the Meadowlands Racetrack, we were able to see the jockeys and horses practicing. After listening to the guide tell us about the track and the horses, one of the students asked if the jockeys were handicapped.

Puzzled, I asked her to explain. Well, she said, the horses are pulling wheelchairs, aren't they?

Meaghan Monahan
Mahwah, New Jersey

My five-year-old granddaughter was learning her telephone number for school. To help, her dad posted the number near the family computer and used it for her password. When her teacher asked for my granddaughter's number, she proudly replied, "Three, six, four, space, three, three, six, zero, enter."

Rosemarie Corsner
Chapel Hill, Tennessee

Several weeks ago I was beginning a new and exciting lesson with my students—government! To get a feel for my students' knowledge base, I began with a few vocabulary questions.

"What is a candidate?" I asked, having just finished reading a newspaper article about presidential hopefuls.

A young fourth grader hesitantly raised his hand and answered, "Someone from Canada?"

Dylan Hartwell
Hamilton, Ohio

I recently had the opportunity to attend a technology training workshop sponsored by our school district and found the technology more modern than I expected. I had to chuckle as I washed my hands and noticed the "FOR LAPTOP ONLY" label along the network terminal outlet next to the toilet seat in the restroom.

Rick Soria
Fort Walton Beach, Florida

In my tenth grade English class we were having a discussion about Sigmund Freud's impact on the 20th century.

One student asked if Freud was still alive. I responded "no" and moved on. The same student raised her hand again and, with a puzzled look on her face, stated: "I think he's alive. I just saw him perform at the Mirage in Las Vegas!"

I informed the student that Sigmund Freud and Siegfried and Roy were not one and the same.

Nancy Wickstrom
Rolling Hills Estates, California

I walked my first-grade students to the bus area after school one day and returned to my classroom. I was working at my desk when one of my students ran in, puffing, and said that she had forgotten to give me a letter from her mother.

I told her she had better hurry because the bus would leave without her. She replied, "That's OK. The driver is waiting for me. Here's the note."

I took the note from her hand. It read: "Clarissa will be taking the bus home today."

Ann Gonzalez
Tucson, Arizona

Here in Maine we have not had much of a winter so far, but we recently experienced a terrible cold snap. One Saturday, our kindergartener, Logan, told us that there had been no outdoor recess at his school the previous day.

When we asked him why not, he replied, "Because the windshield wiper was below zero!"

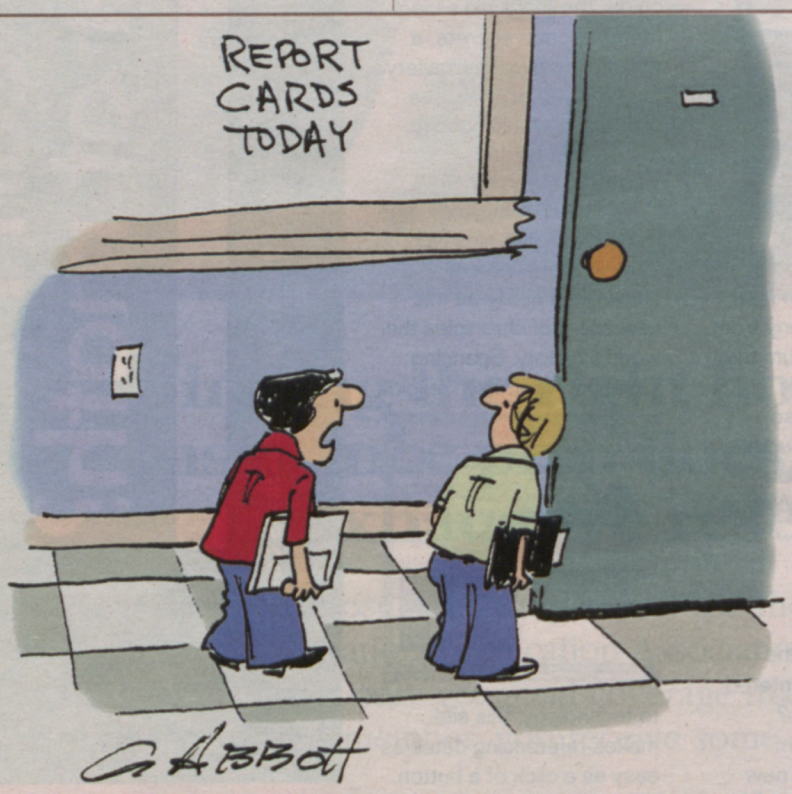
For those of you not familiar with the cold weather term "wind chill factor," we now know one kindergartener who is!

Kristi Boucher
West Paris, Maine

Making sense of space is an interesting process for some students. I explained to my second graders about how we were going to have a total lunar eclipse in our area that night. I said I hoped their parents would let them stay up late to watch the eclipse, around 9 o'clock.

When I asked if there were any questions, one very serious young man raised his hand and said, "What channel did you say that was on again?"

Cyndie Bleskan
Denver, Colorado



"I'm blaming my grades on the global economy. How about you?"

Mixed Memories

After my sixth grade music class asked questions about opera, I set up a bulletin board with covers from *Opera News* magazine. The students picked out the photo of Pavarotti right away.

But one boy looked puzzled and asked, "Didn't he have something to do with Princess Di's death?" I was trying to figure out what he meant when the rest of the class called out "No, that was the paparazzi!"

Renee Ashley
Huntington Station, New York

While studying the Southeastern region of the United States with my fourth grade class, I asked the students to name the insect that destroyed cotton crops. One student excitedly said, "That's easy! It was the Bulwinkle!"

Of course he meant "boll weevil."

Elizabeth Lencho
Janesville, Wisconsin

One of our fifth grade students has numerous allergies. Upon entering his classroom the first day of school, he looked warily at the three aquariums. As the seats in the center of the class were taken, he would have to take a seat near one of the aquariums.

The student walked up to his teacher and asked if he could exchange with another student. When asked why, he remarked that he couldn't sit next to the aquariums since he was allergic to seafood!

Mary J. McMeekin
Davenport, Iowa

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

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Health Resources

New Partnership for Older Women's Health

Women today can expect to live as much as one-third of their lives beyond menopause--the milestone that marks the end of their reproductive years. The changes that occur in a woman's body after menopause can increase the risk of getting some diseases, and other diseases just occur more often in older women. Learn more about menopause and other important women's health issues from the Partnership for Post Menopausal Women's Health.

Call toll-free **877-98-PMHEALTH** or visit www.womensorganizations.org

Problems With The Air in Your School?

The NEA Health Information Network supports the use of EPA's *Tools for Schools Action Kit* to prevent and manage indoor air quality problems. The kit includes guidance, a problem solving wheel, and video.

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Instructional Aids

ADHD Program helps problem students become success stories. Visit www.adhdwellness.com.

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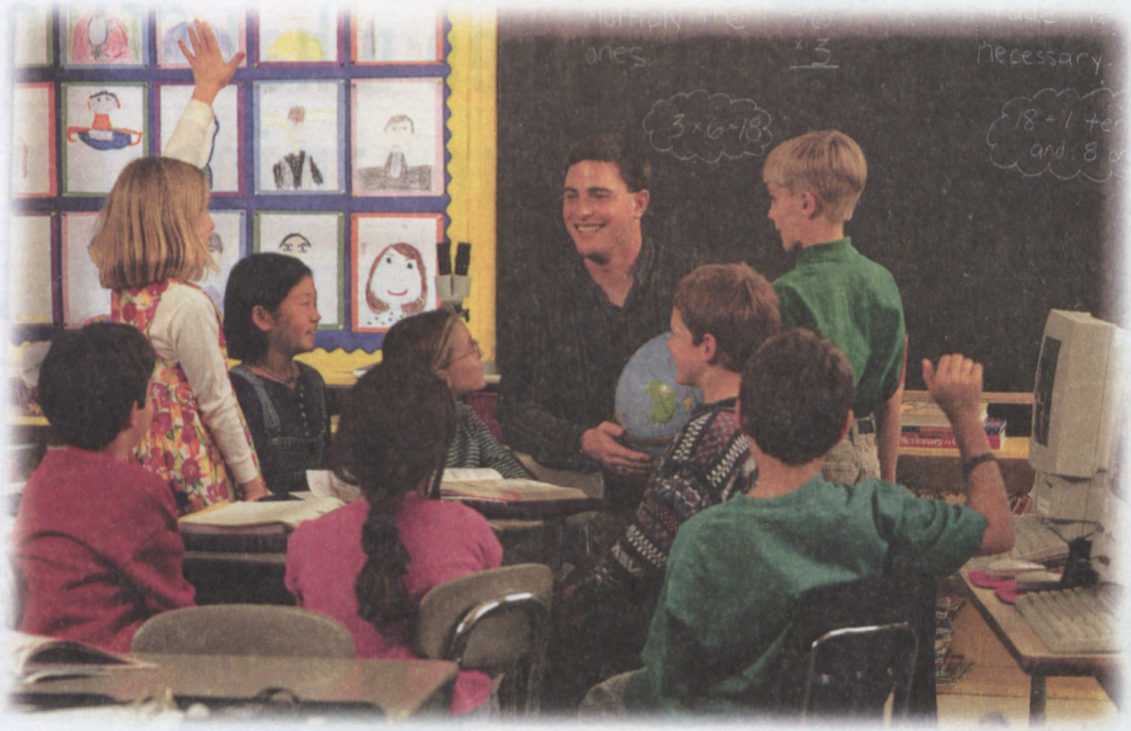

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